

264154

SIGHT & SOUND

THE FILM
QUARTERLY

SUMMER 1946

VOL 15 NO 58

PRICE 2s 6d

PUBLISHED BY BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE

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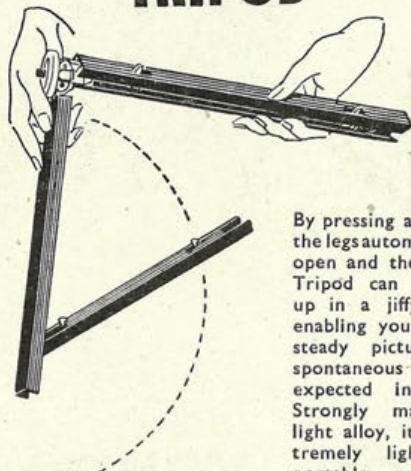
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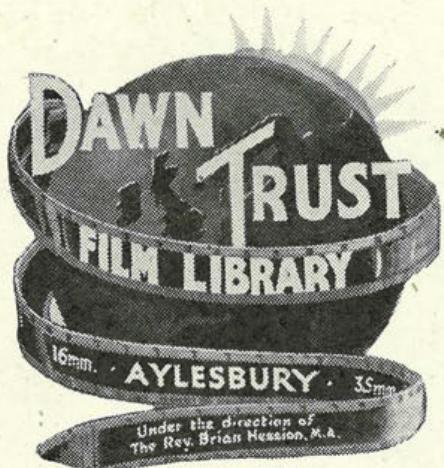
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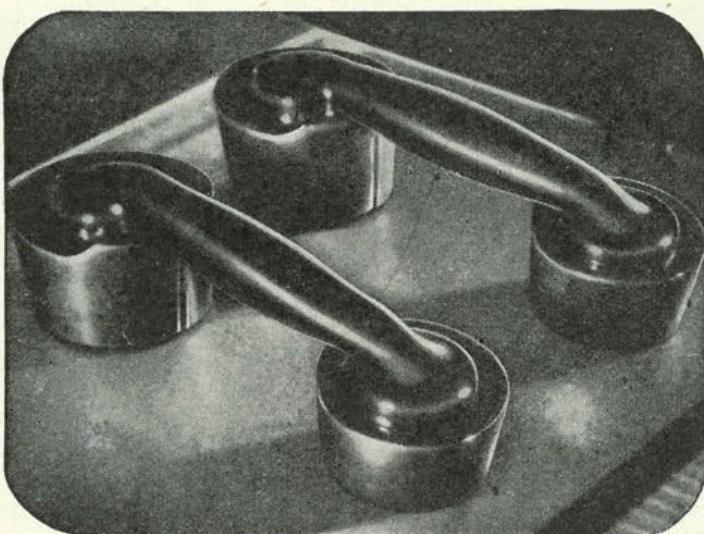


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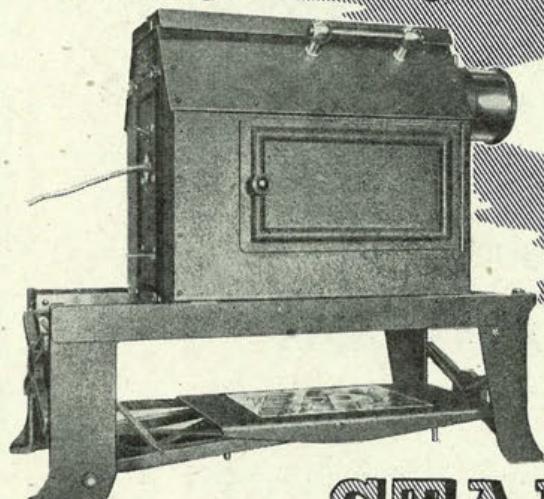
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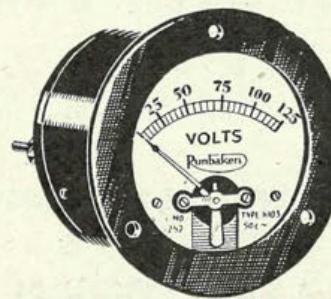
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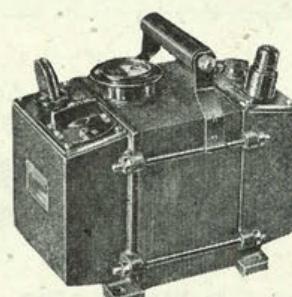
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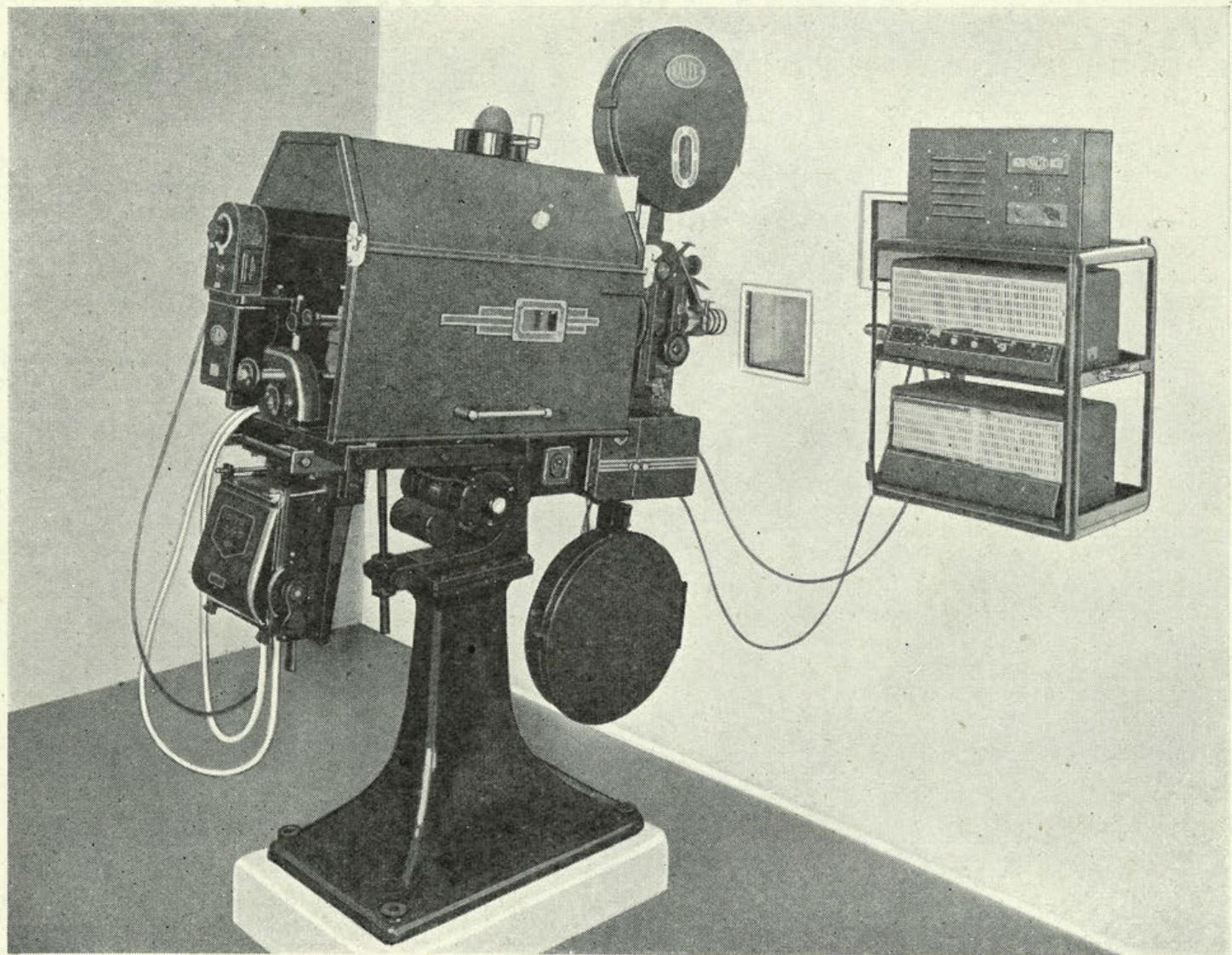
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TO READERS

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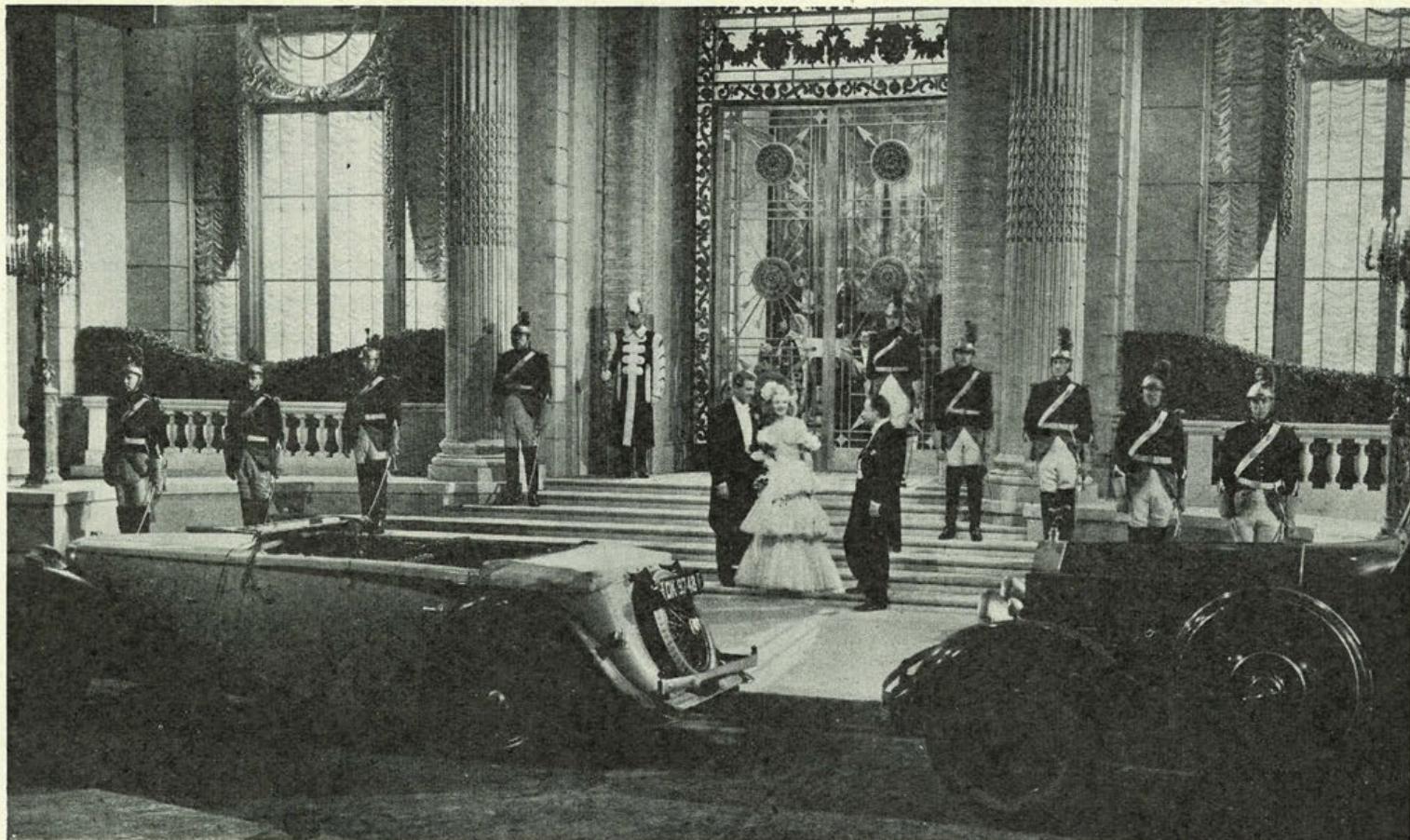
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TOWARDS AN IMPERIAL FILM SOCIETY

During the past six months the British Film Institute has given active assistance and encouragement to a number of Film Societies throughout the Commonwealth. The same difficulty confronts all of them—the problem of obtaining films. KEITH BEAN was requested by SIGHT AND SOUND to explore the position and here puts forward a practical solution—an Imperial Federation of Film Societies, leading ultimately to a world Federation

IN THIS SPRING AND SUMMER of 1946 I have been participant or observer at eight imperial or international conferences. Each underlined the absence of any comparable effort in the cultural aspects of the film. True, Mr. Rank summoned his men from far parts of the earth for policy discussion and planning on the commercial plane. Good things seem likely to come of that conference—in more ambitious production ideas for Australia, for example. But in the artistic, educative, cultural aspects . . . nothing.

Because international (or imperial) co-ordination of activities in this sphere will mean the strengthening of each local effort, it seems to me worthy of consideration by every film society in every country. Because the growth of film appreciation and of knowledge of new ways of using the film for educative, social, commercial, scientific purposes will benefit the industry as a whole, the producers and distributors are effectively concerned. Because

of the obvious social and cultural advantages involved, there is an obligation on local and national governmental and administrative bodies to take an active and helpful interest.

An international co-operative film society (or federation) should therefore command the widest support and, once launched, should be assured of ever-expanding success. It is the formation of just such an organisation that I am now proposing.

The objects of this Federation would be as wide as the objects of the most progressive local film institute society, translated on to a scale beyond the resources of any individual society, or even of any national federation of societies. They would be as wide as the objects of SIGHT AND SOUND—but translated to action.

Who takes the initiative to explore the structure and scope of such a Federation, to assess its immediate prospects of support, to coerce (if necessary) the indifferent

who could help but won't without gentle urging? I can make the suggestion in print and it may be a suggestion which has already occurred to many interested minds. I know, for instance, that the lack of international help in their work is felt by film societies in Australia and South Africa. How do we transfer aspiration to definite action?

It seems to me that the instrument already exists. The British Film Institute has the knowledge, inspiration and standing to launch such a Federation by marshalling the help of the existing film societies. Initially, the core of such a movement would be the film societies of the United Kingdom and Ireland, whose record of disinterested and enthusiastic work for film suggests that their co-operation would be automatic provided they were assured of the bona fides of the new body. The way to that assurance is to have them in on the planning of the body from its very earliest stages.

But also there are already in existence film societies in South Africa, Australia and other territories whose benefit from such a Federation would be obvious and whose co-operation, I am sure, would be immediate. Let us have them all in. Let us try and marshal all we have now. Planning for extension can begin at once; but let us start with what we have.

It is with this thought that I have considered more practically a programme for such a Federation.

It seems to me that such a Federation could purchase copies of all outstanding films—both "classics" and new masterpieces as they become available—and send them round its circuit for showings which at first would be once monthly. (The frequency could be stepped up as the Federation's resources in films increased.)

To ensure an even flow with the least possible travelling time—"dead" time—the films should travel by air, at any rate on the initial tour of the circuit. (Constituent members of the Federation could in time build up their own libraries to share the storing of the Federation's films and much movement of film between members might then take place—by air or sea according to time available and other pertinent factors.)

With the freight department of British Overseas Airways Corporation, I have worked out schedules for the initial tour of one possible circuit assuming all existing societies in the British lands from Scotland eastward and southward to New Zealand would take part. And keeping this nucleus circuit I have worked out how it could become much more effective and much more profitable—in the monetary sense of lowering costs to each member of the Federation as well as in the cultural sense.

The societies which I believe exist as potential members of the Federation are: Those in England, Scotland and Ireland plus those in Malta, South Africa (Johannesburg, Capetown, Stellenbosch and Durban), Ceylon, Australia (Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth), and New Zealand (Auckland and Wellington).

Here is a natural line of distribution along the Empire air routes. After touring those of the member-societies in the United Kingdom and Ireland who booked it, each monthly packet of film could be despatched to these overseas centres by air, to cover them all within two

months of departure from England. Allowing three days in each centre, a sample time-table would be: Arriving Malta September 1st, Johannesburg September 6th, Capetown September 10th (to cover Stellenbosch by train within the following week because there is no air service), Durban September 17th, Colombo September 28th, Sydney October 6th, and after touring the Australian centres, Auckland October 24th.

After Auckland and Wellington the film could be routed by sea or air to any allocated destination.

I will not here go into too much detail, except to say that there is every assurance that such a programme could be kept and, possibly, improved later when air services settle down to more normal operation. The air freightage cost on a 50 lb. packet of film on this circuit would be £125. Of that more anon. But the advantages of including many other centres along the route in the Federation becomes obvious when it is seen that seventeen more centres could be added for an additional cost of less than £10. That is, the freightage charges for eleven overseas centres would be about ten guineas each but the freightage charges for twenty-eight centres would come down to under £5 each.

The additional centres I have in mind have all suitable populations for the formation of film societies which would benefit by joining the Federation. They are: Cairo, Nairobi, Salisbury, Bulawayo, Port Elizabeth, Delhi, Simla, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Christchurch and Dunedin. The only difference their inclusion in the circuit would mean, apart from distributing costs further, would be to extend the schedule by about two months—reaching Malta September 1st and Auckland December 21st.

Already I have allowed much detail to creep into what was intended to be an exploratory statement. There is much other detail about air-routing films but it is more properly left to the practical investigation which, I would like to think, may come soon.

For such an inquiry also is the question of circuits for material which may start from Australian or Indian producers. Most of the movement, at any rate for some years to come, would be from the European end outward but the young film-production industries overseas would contribute increasing material.

On the question of costs I will do no more than suggest some possibilities. The Federation would necessarily exist on some sort of capitation fees in which the United Kingdom and Irish societies would be contributory. Beyond that much of the expenditure could be met, I am sure, by grants from cultural bodies (the British Council, perhaps, and the education authorities of the territories the Federation served), from producers and distributors and from funds and private benefactors interested in the furtherance of culture.

For the moment I have done no more than make one nuclear suggestion and offer one possible method of meeting the practical difficulties of distance. There may be better methods. And there are many more possibilities of extension of the work of the Federation, possibilities which will be realised by every progressive film society and can through such a Federation be brought to life in societies which have not yet realised them. The scope is illimitable . . .

POSTSCRIPT TO INDIA

An account of the work of Information Films of India by WINIFRED HOLMES

The unit has recently been disbanded

WORKING WITH Indian directors and technicians in an Indian studio for six months last year was a valuable and interesting experience. It is always salutary to work in a strange country; your reputation counts for little and you have to start from scratch and build up your goodwill entirely on your own merits. When this is in a country with which you are politically at war; where there is a wall of mistrust and bitterness to separate you from your colleagues, it is an even more delicate task than usual.

At first I felt I was being watched from a distance—had I an axe to grind? There is always a lurking fear of exploitation or patronage, born of old unhappy experience, to sour relationships between the two races until a close working partnership on an equal footing can arise, based on mutual respect and warmth of feeling. But gradually, as I worked first with one director and then another, and with editors and sound recordists and stenographers, the barriers came down. Being anti-British politically did not mean being anti-British personally I was glad to find, and this experience makes me hope that the future relationship of Britain and independent India will be on a firmer foundation of friendship and understanding than before.

THE VIRTUES OF TWO RACES

In many ways the two races are complementary. Patience, tolerance, non-aggression are Indian virtues. Carried to excess they are the enemies of efficiency and good craftsmanship . . . "It'll do," said with a shrug of the shoulders, all too easily excuses inferior work. We, on the other hand, appear irritable, domineering, aggressive, ready to fly off the handle about trifles—in fact rather ridiculous. Each people can modify the other's faults. Day to day working together in a film studio sharply points these differences: resulting perhaps in total failure, misunderstanding, dislike, or else growing into the best kind of collaboration with good films to show for it.

Information Films of India—I.F.I.—set up in the early stages of the war by Alex Shaw for the Government of India, became more and more all-Indian during its years of growth, until when I worked in it last year, all but three of the production and administrative staff were Indian. The directors came from Bengal, Malabar, Lucknow and the technicians from all over the country—Hindu, Moslem, Christian, Parsee, Jewish, and from many castes and social strata. The Producer-in-Charge, Exra Mir, came from Calcutta; the Chief Editor, Pratab Parmar, from the Indian State, Baroda; the Production Manager, Gopal Krishna Maresh, was a native of Bombay, while his Assistant, Gulam Hussain, was a Moslem from the Punjab.

The number of religious festivals for which the whole studio was given holidays was astonishing. After we had had Cocoanut Day, to celebrate the end of the monsoon,

and Dussera and the Parsee New Year, Pateti, and the Moslem New Year, Id, and the Hindu New Year, Diwali, I said jokingly to the Chief Administrative Officer, as we got off a bus one day and went into the studio together: "Well, Mr Sen, you've no holiday to cope with this week, at any rate!" He smiled and said, "Ssh, to-day's the chief Jain festival of the year, but no one has admitted to being a Jain and claimed it as a holiday; so I'm saying nothing about it!"

WESTERN IRRITATION

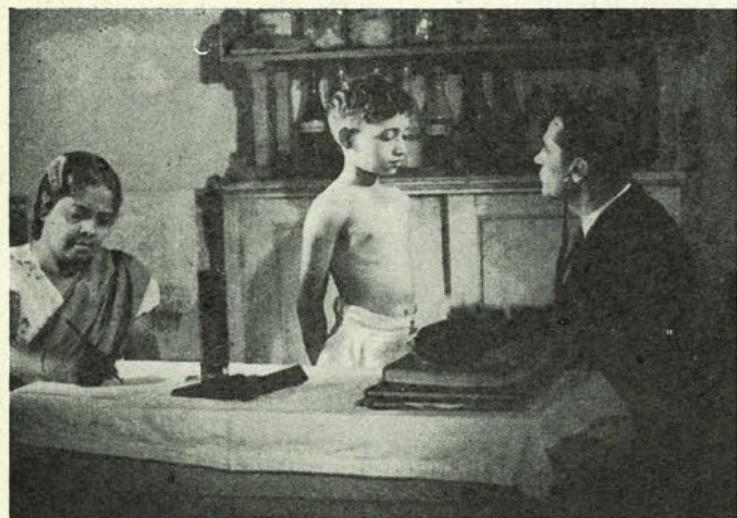
At first I felt a Western irritation and annoyance when the stenographer, Mr Desai, repeatedly went off early to fast, or the studio was closed for two days and I couldn't get any work done, but later I became Indian, forgot to fret and thoroughly enjoyed the extra relaxation in a trying climate, and the fun and gaiety of the festive holiday-making of the Bombay crowds and the exotic picturesqueness of the processions and pujas. It is sometimes thought in the West that Indians are a melancholy people, living a joyless and miserable life on the verge of starvation and extreme poverty. Starvation and poverty there are, and disease and misery. But there is also a tremendous gusto for life, plenty of gaiety and fun, colour and variety to relieve the picture. Indian people will walk miles for entertainment—a film, a circus, a fair—however simple or primitive. A love of clowning and burlesque is only second to their intense passion for music. Walk in among the crowds on Chowpatty Beach on Cocoanut Day, or through the Bazaar at Diwali, the feast of lights, and see the smiling good-humoured people in their best clothes, the women decked out with gold and silver and many tinkling ornaments, the children flying tiny kites or carrying windmills or blowing bright-coloured paper horns . . . watch the peasants of a village dancing and throwing vermilion powder at each other at Dussera . . . see the vigorous Pathan wrestling matches or lose yourself at a Moslem Fair at Id . . . then you will get another impression altogether. These things need filming: one day I hope they will be filmed and then the true India will show herself to the world.

I.F.I. was beginning to interpret India and the life of her peoples and it is sad news that it has been disbanded, except for a skeleton staff to tidy up the loose ends, since the Legislative Assembly cut its revenue last April. There is no other short or documentary film-producing unit in the country and a deal of talent, experience and enthusiasm is being dissipated. Under the huge question-mark which is India to-day smaller queries raise their heads. Will the new Central Government reinstate I.F.I. as a Government film unit? Will member states of the Union set up their own separate units? Will the provinces set up smaller film-producing bodies? Will, in fact, Indians make the fullest use of this valuable medium of publicity and education—particularly valuable with a vast illiterate



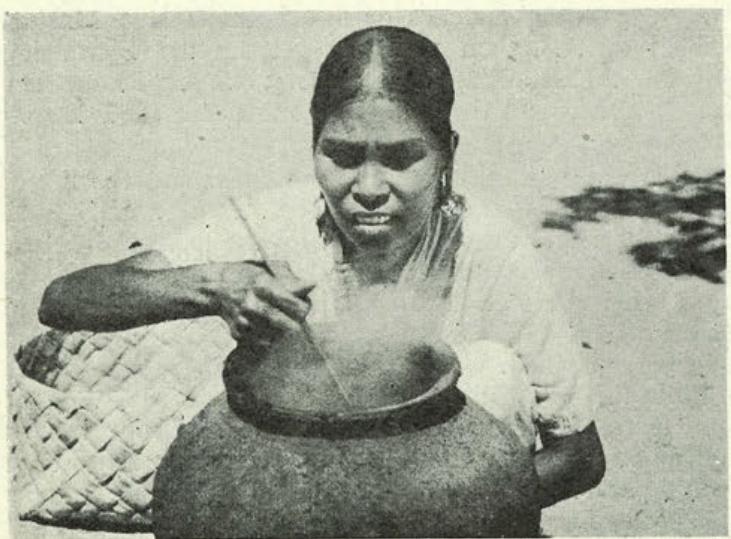
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I.F.I.

population—to speed their country's progress into the modern world?

These questions will not find their answers at once. But in the meantime we should commemorate the pioneer work I.F.I. has done and record the way in which it was slowly forming part of India's new nationalist culture. Many Indians will disagree violently with this statement. They will say that because it was a Government-sponsored unit and devoted to propaganda, its films were anything but part of the national life. Certainly they were forced on the people by the wartime D.I.R. which ruled that every cinema in the land must show a certain footage of Government-approved film in every programme. I was told that Indian audiences shut their eyes or walked out when an I.F.I. short came on the screen.

No doubt this was true of their reception in the early days, when their content was war-effort and war-propaganda. But it is not true now. The war was never popular in India. The people felt it was not their war; they had been forced into it without being consulted—surely one of the major tactical errors of our history?—and the people's sympathies were with the Congress Ministries which resigned, rather than against the Japanese. War propaganda was unpopular and I.F.I. films, however good they may have been, shared in that unpopularity. The Indians who worked in I.F.I. from the first must be credited for their courageous and loyal adherence against opposition to something they believed would be of value to their country as time went on. And so it has proved, in fact.

The war angle in I.F.I. films gradually receded and finally vanished altogether, in spite of an occasional directive from Delhi, and audiences found they were seeing themselves or their brothers and sisters in other parts of the vast sub-continent on the screen instead of tanks and guns and service personnel. And they liked it. They liked it very much; and there was no shutting of eyes or leaving the cinema when an I.F.I. short on the handicrafts, the music, the traditional dances, the architectural and sculptural heritage of India appeared. Through them people were feeling a new interest in their own country and in their fellow Indians and a growing pride in Indian accomplishment.

TREMENDOUS OUTPUT

To show the variety and representative quality of the subjects I.F.I. was tackling last year I will list the films in production during my six months in I.F.I. . . . *All India Radio*; Post, Telegraph and Telephone films; *The Palmyra tree of the South*; *Bassein Village*—a study of a fishing village north of Bombay; *Kisan*, peasant life; *India's Life-line, her Railways*; *South Indian Village*; *Rural Bengal*; *Country Craft*—the sailing ships which have traded round the coast of India for centuries; *Post-war Reconstruction No. 1*; *Water for Millions*—the supply of water for human use and consumption in the big towns; *Rajputana Village Life*; *River-boats of Bengal*; *Human Salvage*—a film on the treatment of Juvenile Delinquency in Bombay; *Child Welfare*—the ignorance and bad old ways of looking after small children and infants, especially among the mill-workers; the Persian Gulf and its relationship with India; *Care of the Eyes*; *Food Storage*; and in addition several simple films made in Hindustani only for showing by mobile vans in villages.

To keep up such a tremendous output the resources of I.F.I. were stretched to the utmost. Compared with a British studio these resources were limited. The equipment was old, much of it out of date, as none had come into the country during the war. The technicians were badly paid and too few. There were only two script-writers and no one to do research. But in spite of these drawbacks the films got made somehow and made extraordinarily well under the circumstances. The Producer-in-Charge, Ezra Mir, never spared himself and his team worked hard. Some films were even better than just plain good and have had an appreciative reception overseas in competition with home or American production. *Tree of Wealth*, the film on the cocoanut palm, has just been singled out for consideration of an award by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, while *Bassein Village*, *Country Craft* and *River-boats of Bengal*, on which more time and care was spent than can usually be the case, have all had a special success at home in India.

A sense of social responsibility was growing into I.F.I., and a belief that it should tackle social evils: should educate the people as well as entertain and instruct them. *Care of the Eyes* and *Child Welfare* were the first subjects of this type. The latter showed a mill-worker mother doping her small child with opium and leaving it all day in the dark airless chawl while she went to work, instead of taking it to the mill nursery, run on modern hygienic lines. It also showed how, when the child's eyes or throat or ears were sore, she chewed *pan-betel*—and then spit it into the affected place, thereby spreading all kinds of infection, and other evils of bad-feeding and hygiene. It was to have been the first of a series of such films, made in consultation with the Tate Institute of Social Sciences and other Social workers.

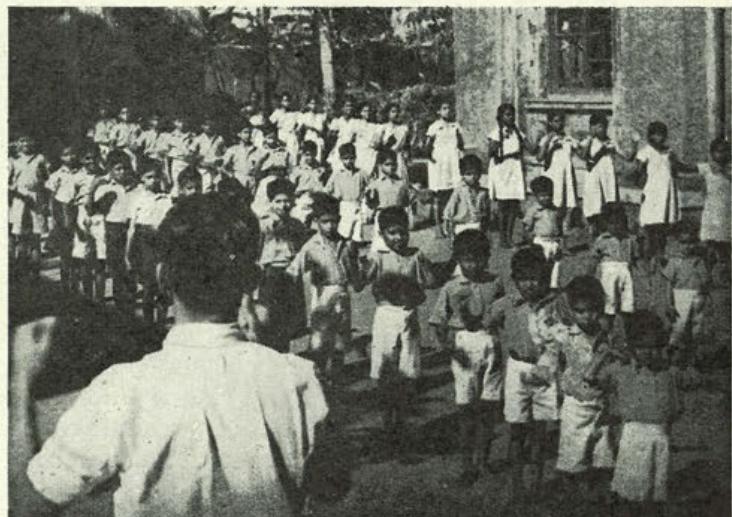
As a final proof of the way in which I.F.I. films were becoming more and more part of the national life, special shows for students and school-children were taking place every Sunday morning in the cities, under the auspices of the High Schools and Headmasters' Associations. The shows lasted for two hours and consisted of I.F.I. shorts, with an occasional cartoon to lighten the fare. But the children did not think the fare heavy or the time to drag. They were always sending delegations to ask that the programmes should last for three instead of two hours, and competition to get in to the shows at the price of 2 annas each was tremendous. Over forty thousand children in Bombay City alone saw those films during three months last summer. The scheme was started in the Province of Bombay and it soon spread to other Provinces—Madras, Sind, Bengal, and to some of the States. Provincial Education Ministers supported it and there is no doubt that it was a significant development, forerunner to the use of educational films in Indian schools.

But now the supply of films has dried up. I.F.I. has closed down and presumably these Sunday morning shows have closed down too. Let us hope that I.F.I., or some other national film-producing unit will be set up before there has been time for all this enthusiasm and goodwill to die, and before the directors and technicians who gave their talent, their hard work, skill and growing belief in their social responsibility to their country to be swallowed up in better-paid commercial feature production, from which it will be difficult to prize them out.



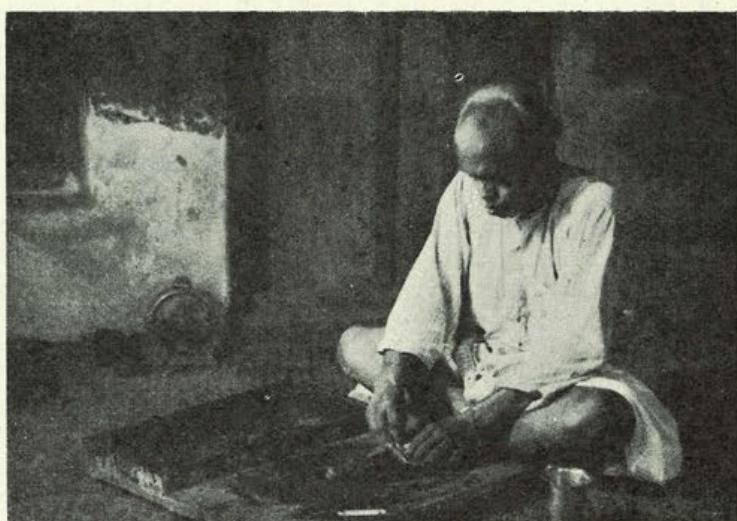
Palmyra

I.F.I.



Human Salvage

I.F.I.



Handicrafts of South India

I.F.I.

CHILDREN AND THE ENTERTAINMENT FILM

More than four hundred thousand children attend special matinées every week in this country alone. Opinions differ as to the value or wisdom of the "clubs" controlled by the great circuits but there is no doubt that the films at present available for children are for the most part unsuitable. In this article Miss MARY FIELD, M.A., Director of the Gaumont-British Instructional Children's Films Department describes an experiment in production to remedy this lack which is costing £200,000 a year

WOULD YOU PAY TO SEE A PLAY? This is one of the questions asked by the organizers of the experiment in introducing children to the theatre which is being undertaken by Toynbee Hall with the collaboration of the L.C.C. Members of the child audiences are asked whether play-going is a leisure-hour activity for which they would hand out hard cash. The answers are still coming in. Would you pay to see a film? At the present moment the answer of hundreds of thousands of children in this country is emphatically "Yes". Regularly every Saturday morning they pay their sixpence to go to their Film Club. This is an activity on which they are willing to expend money.

There is no need to lure children into the cinema nor is there any need to train them in habits of film-going. They take to it naturally. The Gaumont and Odeon Film Clubs are an attempt to remove children out of the adult cinema into an entertainment primarily devised for children.

There is no suggestion that the clubs are "good" for them, for experience has shown that children stay away from anything that is advertised as being "suitable" for them. They go to the clubs because they are members and they enjoy the sense of importance that comes from being specially catered for. Most of these children in addition go one, two or even three times a week to the adult cinema, but there is some evidence that leads one to believe that they prefer the special children's film club. In one area, the members of a Women's Group gave their children a choice of going to the pictures twice with the family or only once with the family and once at their film club, and the majority chose to attend the club. In the same way, sixty per cent. of a boys' social club said that they preferred the Saturday morning exhibition although they frequently went with their families to other film shows.

WHY ARE CLUBS POPULAR?

Apart from their pleasure in programmes selected, as far as possible, under war and immediate post-war conditions, to suit their tastes, why do the children go to the clubs? Partly, no doubt, on account of home conditions which do not allow quiet and space for hobbies and play; partly because the cinemas are a pleasant place to go when

there are not sufficient open spaces for out-of-door play; partly because it very frequently rains on Saturday mornings and it is far more comfortable in the warm, air-conditioned cinemas than in the wet streets or the crowded home. Yet these material reasons do not entirely explain the phenomenon of the children attending the cinema clubs. Many of them go early and use the cinema as a club premises. Some of the girls knit or sew, some children read, many use it as a place where they can meet their friends and talk. From this obvious need of a club has developed so many of the cinema club activities—stamp collecting, hobbies, dramatic clubs, orchestras, etc.

A MUCH-FELT WANT

Undoubtedly, the hundreds of children in a cinema club are far too many for a club organization as welfare workers know it; but where, on a Saturday morning, can one find the premises or the youth leaders to supply club activities for 26 groups of 50 children; perhaps 1,300 children in all go to make up one cinema club in an urban area. There is no doubt that these cinema clubs supply a much-felt want. There is no question of divided loyalties on the part of the children who, at any rate, will have at some time in their life to be introduced to the problem of loyalty as John Galsworthy saw it. At the Trocadero Club at the Elephant & Castle, London, many members belong also to the Mission on the other side of the road; when the Mission and the Club play a football match against each other there appears to be no problems for those who belong to both groups, most of whom support the Mission, as being the smaller organization. But the essence of the cinema club is naturally enough seeing films, and the question is, what films do the children enjoy? The word "enjoy" is here the operative word. This is the children's leisure-hour activity, and if they do not like the programme they will not come. If they do not come they will not avoid seeing films but will spend their money on an adult programme.

The problem of those who make films for the club is, therefore, to give the children the very best that they will take. It is not possible to talk about what children like in general. As with adults, so with children. So many individuals, so many tastes. What one child likes fails to interest another. An immense amount of research has been done,

very largely in America, on the reactions of children to entertainment films, but the films were adult films, since, with the exception of a certain number of pictures made in Russia, and the experiments now being made in this country, practically no films have been made especially for children. The results of this research cannot be summed up in a few words, but enough has been done to show that generalization about children and films is not easy.

Owing to the war-time restrictions on film stock, it is only recently that special entertainment films for children have been able to get regularly into the Gaumont and Odeon Clubs in this country. There is not enough evidence yet available for any documented statements to be made about children's tastes but there are some indications which must be of great interest to all who occupy themselves with the problem of the child and the cinema.

FELIX STILL HAS FOLLOWERS

In the first case it is clear the children's film taste is naturally good. They like films in which the story is clearly told by action and they like a good logical plot. Logic is their strong point. An excellent example of the type of film they appreciate is *Tom Sawyer*, which is full of adventure, comedy and suspense, although as it was made for adult audiences, it is really too long for children. Children like cartoons. They are conditioned to coloured cartoons, but it is possible that the modern adult cartoon moves too quickly for them and older pictures, made ten or twelve years ago, are really more suited to their taste. Some still prefer the classic Felix, quoting him as the high spot in a programme. The majority of the child audiences are sufficiently curious and intelligent to enjoy a good travel, nature or interest picture; but most of the films of this type which they see have been made for adults; the commentary is usually unsatisfactory since the children like to talk amongst themselves when they are seeing a film, so that a picture which depends on its commentary to explain it remains unexplained. There appears, too, to be, among some children, a mistrust of commentary. They prefer direct speech and dialogue. What they like, above all, to see is children. The fact that a child is in a film makes it possible for them to identify themselves with the picture on the screen. As the average age of the club members is roughly between 7 and 11, it is a very great pity that the law of this country forbids film-makers to employ children under the age of 14, for the fourteen-year-old child is often too mature to appeal to the eight-year-old. The Children's Film Department is doing its best to overcome this difficulty by having made travel pictures in foreign countries and employing quite young children, since outside England this is not an infringement of the law. It is also possible to film younger children in the Dominions. It is very much hoped that soon the restrictions will be adjusted in this country.

There is evidence that the girls feel that their tastes are not sufficiently catered for. They are, however, a minority in the clubs, since many of them are kept at home on Saturday mornings for domestic duties. They are also less noisy in expressing their views than the boys, and it will take some time to assess how great their feeling of grievance really is and how far it can be met. At present, every film

specially made for children has a girl in it who takes an active and useful part in the story development.

THE SERIAL

The children do not care for a programme which consists almost entirely of short films. They feel cheated if they do not have a feature film. At the same time, most features are rather long for them. The ideal feature is 50 to 60 minutes in length. However, the high spot of the programme for children, as for the many unsophisticated adults, is the serial story. All magazine editors know the entertainment value of suspense, and as long as the suspense is not too acute it is equally attractive in films and not harmful.

It is not difficult to assess the effects of educational films on children, since it is possible to use control groups and to isolate the children from other influence; but it is difficult to assess the effect of special children's films on children since members of the audience are subject also to the influences of adult films, school films, wireless, the adventure strips in Sunday papers and the 2d. bloods. To isolate the effects of an individual film and disentangle it from all these other influences is not easy. It is clear, however, that what is seen in the entertainment films does influence the children who are natural mimics, but how far the effect is lasting it would be difficult to say. After the showing of a film whose underlying theme was that one "should not steal by finding," one cinema manager was for some weeks inundated with money and objects which the club members had found in the streets and returned to him. In the same way some children, after hearing a film which has the commentary in rhymed couplets, will write a criticism of this film in very good heroic verse. Some children remark upon the good English spoken in children's films and they may possibly imitate it themselves at some time. But it is not likely that these separate influences will last. It will be the long-term general approach, where right values are systematically put before children, that will, after a term of five or more years, eventually leave a lasting influence.

The film is part of our modern culture and makes an irresistible appeal to children. Film-going by children in large groups appears unavoidable. It is important, therefore, that all those who are genuinely interested in the leisure-hour activities of children should collaborate in the great experiment which is being carried on in this country in the production and exhibition of children's films, an experiment which is regarded with such admiration and interest by other countries that they are inspired by our example to consider production of children's films and organization of children's clubs.

Note : Readers interested in this subject should read the Verbatim Report of a Conference on Children and the Cinema recently held by the British Film Institute and the National Council of Women. (2s. 9d. post free from the B.F.I., 4 Gt. Russell St., London, W.C.1).



Sylvie et le Fantôme

Production André Paulvé et L'Ecran Français

THE FRENCH CINEMA SINCE THE LIBERATION

The second of two articles by HAZEL HACKETT. The first, published in the Spring SIGHT AND SOUND, dealt with conditions during the occupation

"A NOUS LA LIBERTE". These were the parting words of René Clair to the reporter of "Combat" after his ten weeks' visit to France in the summer of 1945. They referred to the state of the French cinema, but were not, as might be supposed, an expression of joy at the freedom that had come with the Liberation, but a demand for that essential freedom in working conditions that must be won before the cinema can do its best work. Clair's remark had hope in it, and thereby differed from that of Duvivier a few months earlier, who, in the first shock of return after exile, is reported to have said "Dans deux ans, il n'y aura plus de cinéma français". Ironically enough, it is Duvivier who is now shooting a film in France, while Clair is still in Hollywood, although he has said he will return this year to make a film in Paris.

The remarks quoted are typical of hundreds made about

the French cinema at the moment, and they may come as a surprise to those who have not seen behind the "holiday face" which every aspect of French life assumed to meet the liberating armies. In August, 1944, the cinema industry, like the nation, seemed by a miracle almost unchanged. The great pre-war directors were alive in exile, fresh talent had been discovered, new subjects had been explored, and many excellent films had been made.

Yet almost immediately it became clear that the state of the cinema industry was critical, chiefly because of material and economic difficulties. For months before the Liberation, it had suffered from severe restrictions in electricity consumption, a lack of practically all the raw materials needed for the construction of decors, and gravest of all, a real shortage of raw film, especially after the closing of the big Kodak factory at Vincennes. Its cameras were

worn, its sound and electrical equipment out of date and it had no colour processing plant. At the time of the Liberation, the industry was practically at a standstill.

The first step towards its reorganisation was taken by dissolving the Comité de l'Organisation de l'Industrie Cinématographique (C.O.I.C.) set up by Vichy, and establishing in its place the Comité de Libération du Cinéma Français whose first duty was to re-establish the Trade Unions and to purge the industry of collaborators. Four months after the Liberation, determined efforts by producers, technicians and workpeople resulted in the resumption of work on a number of films started in the last months of the Occupation. No new films were put into production, however, until the beginning of 1945. Over the whole of that year, seventy-five films were started, about half of which were completed and released before 1946.

Since that time the industry has continued to work under the most discouraging and frustrating conditions. Cuts in electricity, without warning as to time or duration, made the winter of 1944/45 a war of nerves, and continued, though more systematically, in the early part of the winter of 1945/46. The 330 tons of coal required monthly to heat the studios were not available and work was often done under arctic conditions. Before the construction of sets

could be started, permits—"bons"—had to be obtained for each material required. This might take weeks or months, and impatient and enthusiastic producers often had recourse to the Black Market where they could get what they wanted immediately, though at fifty times the price. All this demanded a great expenditure of energy and of money. It has been said that at the present moment ten times more physical effort is needed to produce a film in France than in any other country, and it has been estimated that the cost of making a film has risen to six times what it was in 1937, the average cost now being 15 million francs.

René Clair's challenging remark, however, was not provoked solely by material difficulties, but by other restrictions which the cinema trade finds equally irksome. Before work on a film can start, the scenario must be submitted to the Direction Générale du Cinéma which is attached to the Ministry of Information, who must also approve the completed film before it can be shown either at home or abroad. The work is carried out at the producer's own risk, for, so far as I can discover, no provision is made for compensation should the film be rejected either at the scenario or the finished stage. This form of censorship is based partly on moral considerations, but is also prompted by the over-anxious concern of a provisional government for the prestige of its country at a time when it is seeking in every aspect of its life to resume its place among the nations.

A crippling blow to the industry, has been the steadily mounting taxation which at one time was as much as 50% of the receipts taken in the cinemas. It is reckoned that in 1945, the gross receipts from France's 4,000 odd cinemas amounted to over 4,100,000,000 francs. After payment of taxes, and the deduction of distribution and publicity costs, renters' profits, etc., only 9.6% of the gross figure returned to the makers of the films. This percentage represented about half the total costs of production which, for all films in that year, amounted to nine hundred million francs. Without Government help, the deficit could not be met, as it clearly could not be expected that receipts from showings abroad would be sufficient to cover it.

The question became so grave that in January this year French producers threatened to strike. The strike was then postponed and has still not taken place, for the Government has granted a slight tax relief. The producers are demanding also the lifting of taxes on the "film de qualité", the average loss on which at the moment is about 5 million francs a film. The present system of taxation discourages original work, for in order to avoid expense on specially written scenarios, producers are making films from novels and plays, and often using for the latter, theatrical sets.

The most vital question, however, concerns imported foreign films, which in practice means American films. Of the 188 films imported before the war, 180 under an agreement made in 1936, were American. At that time when double programmes were in vogue, about 300 films were needed for the French circuits, but now, following the suppression of the double programme, and the destruction during the war of over 400 cinemas, the French consumption is estimated at 180 films a year. Obviously these cannot all come from Hollywood, and the Americans themselves at first suggested the alternative figure of 108.



Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne

The estimated production capacity of the French studios, is however, 100 films a year, and France, therefore, suggested that not more than 80 foreign films should be imported, of which 60 should be American. A quota system was also to be established under which French renters should be compelled to show French films for 7 out of the 13 weeks of each quarter.

At the time of writing Leon Blum has just returned from his financial mission to the United States with results that are broadly satisfactory for the country, but disastrous for the cinema trade. American films are to be imported in unlimited quantities, and a quota agreement has been made whereby French films must be shown in French cinemas for a minimum of 4 weeks in every 13. It has been estimated that his minimum could be met by the production of about 50 French films a year—exactly half the production at which the trade has been aiming. The measure is labelled “provisional”. Even so its effect will be disastrous for the industry unless drastic protective measures are taken by the Government. When André Malraux was Minister of Information, he made proposals in December, 1945, for the integration of the cinema industry in the plans for the rehabilitation of France. This is the first step that must be taken, and taken immediately if the new quota agreement is not to strike the death-blow to the French cinema, and fulfil the pessimistic prophesy of Duvivier in half the time allowed by him for its realisation !

Such, broadly, are the conditions and climate in which French films are being produced.

The crisis is an economic one and it is extremely grave. On the artistic side there is no lack of richness of ideas or invention. On the contrary, the impression given is that there are too many ideas and too great a number of subjects, and that French directors are still feeling their way a little uncertainly among the themes which are a legacy from the occupation period, and the hitherto forbidden subjects which, since the Liberation, they are free to exploit.

For some months after the Liberation, the films released were either those which had been completed at the beginning of the war and banned by the Germans, or those which had been put into production during the last months of the Occupation and not finished. In the first category, the most significant film was Malraux's *Espoir*, two copies of which miraculously escaped the destruction ordered by the Germans. It is the film of a brilliant amateur, made with a passion for the cinema and for his subject. Shot under front-line conditions during the Spanish civil war, it is unequal, with an interrupted rhythm, and broken sequences, but it has unforgettable scenes of extraordinary depth and poetry. The most provocative film was Renoir's *Règle du Jeu*, finished just before he left for America and banned by Vichy for its immoral character. It is a bitter satire on French aristocratic society in 1939, a merciless picture of worthless people devoid of all sense of responsibility or of reality. The situations are handled with wit and imagination, and the hunting sequence has unusual cinematic power. The most disappointing film of 1939 was Duvivier's *Untel Père et Fils*, a kind of French cavalcade showing the life of a family over four generations and through three wars. Although the scenario is by Charles Spaak and the dialogue by Marcel Achard, the film, which

is necessarily episodic, fails to achieve coherence or conviction, and remains a monumental but undistinguished work.

SUBTLE SATIRE AND OTHERS

In the second category, the most important work to be released was beyond question that of Carné and Prévert *Les Enfants du Paradis*, discussed by Roger Manvell in the Spring number of SIGHT AND SOUND. In June, 1945, came Jacques Becker's *Falbalas* which failed to reach the cinematic power of his *Goupi Mains Rouges*, but which is, nevertheless, a technically excellent film, with one sequence at least, the ping-pong match, which is pure cinema. Its subject, daily life in a great Paris fashion-house, is interesting and has commercial appeal, but the leading characters, played by Micheline Presle, Gabrielle Dorziat and Raymond Rouleau, seem empty and their destinies not important enough to merit the ingenious presentation given to them. It has been suggested, however, that Becker, whose intelligence is not in question, wished to give just this impression of emptiness, and that his film is in essence a subtle satire on a profession whose value as an industry is undoubtedly, but whose contribution to the moral resistance offered to the enemy is thought by some to have been exaggerated. Christian Jacques' *Carmen*, which had been partly made in Italy, was shown in the spring of 1945, but, although distinguished by technical virtuosity and brilliant camerawork, it proved, in spite of Viviane Romance and Jean Marais, stiff and unreal. His *Sortilèges* which came later, a peasant story of the supernatural in the Massif Central—superbly photographed by Louis Page—with scenario and dialogue by Prévert, had more success. *Boule de Suif*, which was released in the autumn, far outstripped the two earlier works, and was the first French film with a resistance theme. It is a combination of Guy de Maupassant's story of that name, and “Mademoiselle Fifi”, set in the period of the Franco-Prussian war, and has been made with a sense of humour, drama, satire and technical skill. Its subject and treatment invite comparison with *Stagecoach*, but it lacks the masterly quality of John Ford's film. *Félicie Nanteuil*, based on “L'Histoire Comique” of Anatole France, was made with Micheline Presle and Claude Dauphin by Marc Allégret, who uses effectively the coy accessories of the theatrical life of 1900, the period in which this tragic, somewhat fantastic drama of love is set. Jean Dreville's film *La Cage aux Rossignols* was a refreshing change from these studied atmospheres, for it dealt in a natural way with the human problems in a school for difficult children, a gentler version of the *Road to Life* theme. The charming actor, Noël-Noël, takes the leading part and also wrote the script, and the children are played by the Petits Chanteurs de la Croix de Bois. In September, 1945, Robert Bresson's film *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* was released and caused an immediate uproar. Bresson transposed Diderot's story of a scorned woman's vengeance from the 18th century to the present day, and, by presenting it against a neutral characterless background, tried to go beyond the story to the psychological implications of pride and vengeance which are true for all time. His accuracy of observation of the behaviour of human beings was so cruel that it provoked defensive laughter and hisses from the audiences in the cinemas. The critics remained divided, but most agreed that it was an interesting

and ingenious experiment that demonstrated again Bresson's original approach to a theme.

SCRUTINISE SCENARIOS

These were the most important works finished and released after the Liberation, but started under the Occupation when subjects and themes were limited. Once the choice of subject was more or less free, it was to be expected that French producers would seize the opportunity to make films of an authentic flavour on the most dramatic thing that had happened to their country during the past five years—the underground movement of resistance to the Germans. The best American and English war films had been those made with real material in the documentary manner, but France had no material of this kind. Her war effort had been of such a nature that, had it been photographed, the records would have endangered the lives of thousands and jeopardised the whole movement. The risk was too great, and so the only authentic record taken of France's fight was when it emerged from clandestinity just before the Liberation of Paris.

Immediately after the Liberation, the Commission Militaire Nationale set up a committee to scrutinise the scenarios of proposed films on the resistance movement, the object being, not only to control the quality, but to prevent the participation of collaborators. Scenarios poured in and, at its first sitting in January, 1945, the committee authorised work on only six out of sixty scenarios. Apart from *La Grande Epreuve* which was purely a montage film with material taken from German newsreels, all the scenarios approved were for fiction films reconstructing episodes in the resistance fight. Not all are good. *Les Clandestins*, for example, made by André Chotin gives a picture that is a mockery of the real resistance people—the kind of film that might be expected from an over-romantic director sufficiently far removed from the events he describes to see them through a heroic haze. At the other extreme is *Jericho*, which was inspired by the bombardment of Amiens prison, carried out by the R.A.F. in February, 1944, in response to a call from the Maquis, in order to allow the escape of important resistance men who were awaiting execution. The atmosphere of a French provincial town occupied by the Germans has been recaptured with amazing accuracy of detail, and the varying reactions of ordinary men and women to an occupying enemy are presented without heroics or drama. The sound-track which contributes greatly to the atmosphere consists solely of sounds that are a part of the story and does not contain one note of music. The scenario is by Claude Heymann, the dialogue by Charles Spaak, and the direction by a young man Henri Calef, who has here shown himself capable of distinguished film-making. *Le Jugement Dernier* is another resistance film which will be remembered, not only for its efficiency, but because it gave a chance to another young director, René Chanas, of whom big things are now expected.

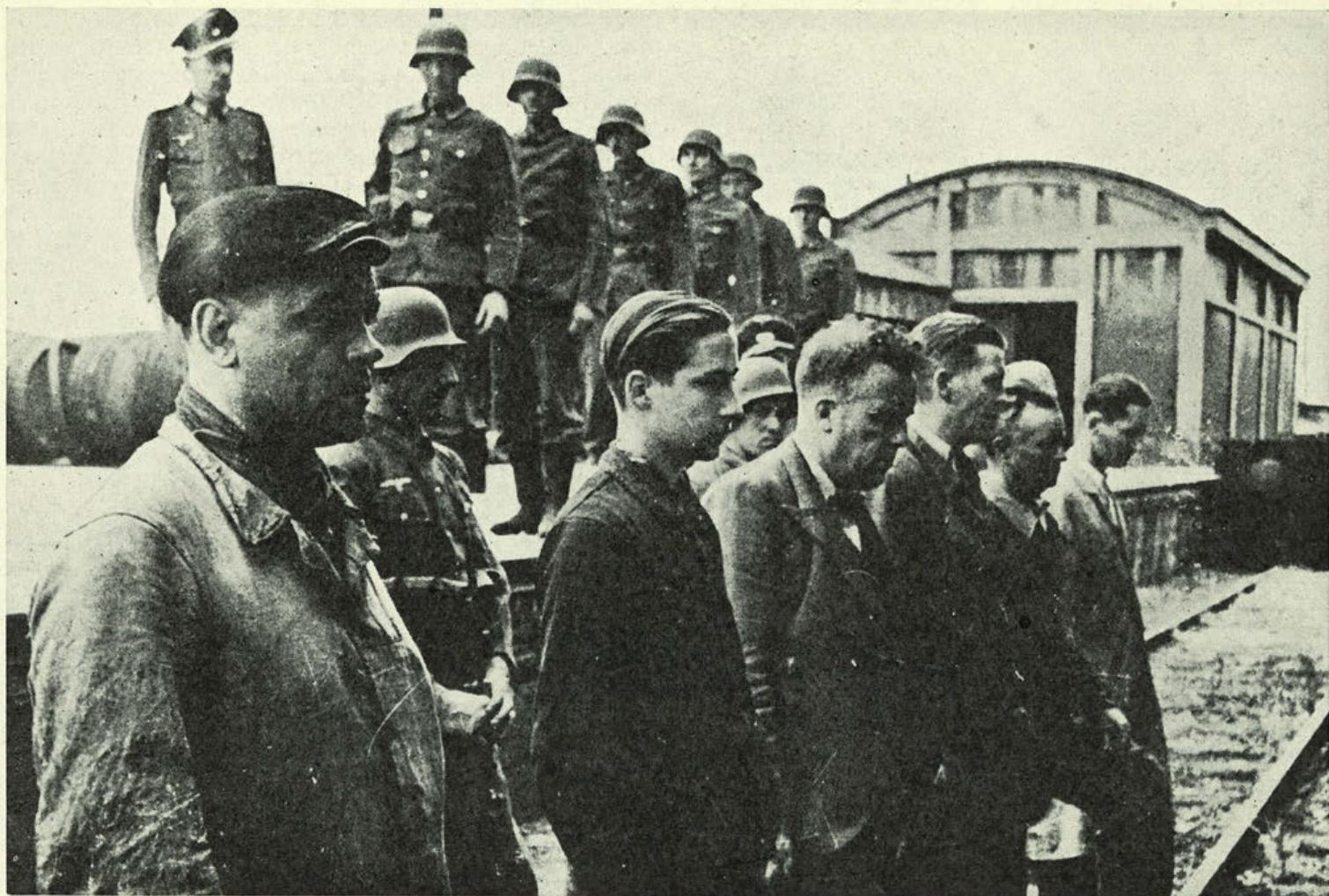
The resistance film, however, is *La Bataille du Rail* made by René Clément, an almost unknown young man who had previously made one short documentary. The film was sponsored by the Co-opérative du Cinema in conjunction with Resistance-Fer, and was intended to be a documentary of 800 metres. The first reels, however, were so im-

pressive that it was decided to extend it to a full-length film, a fact which explains a slight unevenness in the finished work. *La Bataille du Rail* is therefore a film without stars, in which the players are the very men who had formed the most determined and inspired section of the Resistance Movement. The film traces, with responsibility, and imagination, the growth of the movement from small beginnings to the final tremendous acts of sabotage, and the Director throughout has had the intelligence not to caricature the enemy. These are some powerful sequences, the shooting of the hostages, the tank in the wood, the derailment of the train, and the whole presentation is so realistic that the spectator is himself compelled to live through this purging experience of terror and pity. It is a picture that goes beyond its subject, for it symbolises the fight of the ordinary man against the oppressor, and its essential truth will make it a classic of the power of *Kameradschaft* and *La Grande Illusion*.

SUPERNATURAL IN FASHION

Apart from the Resistance films, it is difficult to find any particular tendency in recent French films. They share with America, and with England since *Blithe Spirit*, the present fashion for the supernatural and the other world. It is a fashion which springs possibly from the psychological needs of people who have known losses in war and who unconsciously may take comfort from the suggestion, implicit in all these films, that the other world is very close to the one they know, and that the beings in it continue to interest themselves in the lives of the persons they have left. In this genre the French cinema has given us *Sylvie et le Fantôme*, made by Claude Autant-Lara—a story told with poetry and humour of a romantic young girl's re-orientation in real life thanks to a genuine ghost and three bogus ones. The film has all the delicate charm of which the maker of *Douce* and *Le Mariage de Chiffon* is master. *La Tentation de Barbizon* made by Jean Stelli, is the story of a visit to earth of an angel and a devil and is in the *Topper* style without being so ingenious. It is an amusing film with some risqué situations, and is assured of a big commercial success. The most interesting experiment in this category has been *Le Pays Sans Etoiles* made by Georges Lacombe from a story by Pierre Véry, in which time ceases to divide, and people of to-day relive the lives of others of a hundred years before. There is some lovely photography by Louis Page and first-class acting by Jany Holt and the young Gérard Philippe, who recently astonished Paris by his impassioned performance in Camus' play "Caligula".

Most of the other films released bear traces of the Occupation influence. Decoin who made *Les Inconnus dans la Maison* has given another psychological study of vicious perverted youth in *La Fille du Diable*, which introduces a powerful young actress Andrée Clement, who is marked for fame. The vogue for the period melodrama continues in *Le Capitan*, a swash-buckling romance well made in the grand manner by Alain Vernay from a novel by Zevaco, and in *Roger la Honte* based on the famous story by Jules Mary, and translated to the screen with authentic period flavour by André Cayatte, with Maria Césares and Paul Bernard in the leading parts.



La Bataille du Rail

In spite of increasing difficulties, the French cinema continues to make full use of its rich human capital, and many interesting films are at present under production:—*La Belle et la Bête*, with Cocteau as Director, Christian Berard as artistic Director, Noulaert in charge of the décors, and Auric of the music; *Panique*, Duvivier's first film since his return from America, based on a Simenon novel adapted by Charles Spaak; *Portes de la Nuit*, which Carné and Prévert are making at fabulous cost with Nathalie Nattier and Yves Montand after a disagreement with Marlene Dietrich and Jean Gabin, the original choice for the leading parts; Gide's *Symphonie Pastorale*, which is being produced in Switzerland by Delannoy with Pierre Blanchar and Michèle Morgan who returned specially from Hollywood for the part; *Petrus*, which Marc Allegret is making, also in Switzerland, from the play by Marcel Achard with Simone Simon, another returned exile, and Fernandel; *Illusions* in which the director, Pierre Chenal, just back from South America, renews his partnership with Eric von Stroheim, which was so successful in *Crime et Châtiment*; *L'Homme au Chapeau Rond*, based on a Dostoiewski novel, directed by Pierre Billon, with Spaak as scenarist and Raimu as leading player; *L'Idiot*, also from Dostoiewski, the first full-length film undertaken by Georges Lampin; *Casque d'Or*, Jacques Becker's reconstruction of the true story of the mysterious girl of that name who about 1900 set the Apaches of Paris at one another's throats; *Chouans* which Henri Calef is making

from a script by Spaak based on a novel of Balzac; *Le Père Tranquille*, the story of a quiet little man thrust by circumstances into the position of resistance leader, with Noël-Noël as script-writer and leading player, and directed by René Clement; and *Le 6 Juin à l'Aube*, a study of a young man's attempt at physical and psychological re-adjustment after the war, a theme well suited to the imaginative insight and power of Jean Grémillon who will direct it.

A list of such variety is amazing in the present state of the French cinema industry. The future of the cinema in France is at the moment unpredictable, for it is linked inevitably with the future of the country, which must remain uncertain until a stable Government has been elected.

Almost everything will then depend on the attitude that Government will adopt towards the cinema industry—always supposing that the industry survives the present unequal struggle which it is gallantly waging against far superior economic forces. There is reason to hope that it will survive. The great asset of the industry lies in the imaginative and artistic genius of the people in it, who fortunately continue to show evidence of rebellious, resourceful and determined life. Provided they are given a fair chance economically, their efforts can ensure for the industry a future which will hold for us all, not only interest but inspiration.

CHARLIE THE GROWN UP

The second article on Charles Chaplin by PROF. S. M. EISENSTEIN, translated from the Russian by Herbert Marshall. The first, "Charlie the Kid," appeared in the Spring SIGHT AND SOUND. Quotations for the most part have been re-translated from the article.

CHAPLIN'S SITUATIONS, after all, are just the same as those children read about in Fairy Stories, where an array of tortures, killings, fears and terrors are inevitable accessories.

Their favourite heroes—the terrible Barmaley* ("He eats little children"), the Jabberwockie of Lewis Carroll, Baba Yaga* and Kaschei the Immortal.*

Stories take time to read. And their quintessence, for more light consumption, is distilled from verses.

Thus in the nurseries of England and America persists through the ages a merry necrologue of "Ten Little Nigger Boys", who one after the other, in couplet after couplet, die all imaginable kinds of deaths.

And, what is more, without any guilt at all and without any reason whatsoever.

From the remaining seven one cleaves himself in two. Six remain.

From three remaining, one . . . is crushed by a bear and two remain.

But the worst remains for the last. He got married!

And there were no more "nigger" boys left. . . .

Incidentally, it may be that this last line contains the "significance" of the whole nursery rhyme; Marriage is the end of childish infantile existence—the last negro boy dies and an adult negro emerges!

However, the tendency we are discussing is still more clearly seen in the collection of Harry Graham's "Ruthless Rhymes for Heartless Homes" (the last London Edition was the Nineteenth).

This dedication serves it as a foreword:

"With guilty, conscience-stricken tears,
I offer up these rhymes of mine,
to children of maturer years
(from seventeen to ninety-nine)
a special solace may they be
in days of second infancy".

(from "Verse and Worse" by
Harry Graham. E. Arnold, London. 1905)

The very verses, addressed to those who have fallen into their second childhood, are made according to all the canons dear to . . . first childhood.

"The Stern Parents"

Father heard his Children scream,
So he threw them in the stream,
Saying, as he drowned the third,
"Children should be seen, not heard"!

"Mr. Jones"

"There's been an accident!" they said,
"Your servant's cut in half; he's dead!"
"Indeed!" said Mr. Jones, "And please
Send me the half that's got my keys".

One could write a whole dissertation on Anglo-Saxon humour as compared to the "Slavonic Soul", if, in connection with the last example, one remembers the dramatic treatment of Chekhov's short story "Sleepy".† There a girl-nurse—herself only a child—chokes a child given her to look after, because the child cries at night and won't let her sleep. And all this under the warm peaceful reflections of the green-shaded oil lamp. . . .

But one way or the other, in the dramatic description of the adolescent-girl, in the fantastic structure of Grimm's fairy tales or in the careless amusement of "Ruthless Rhymes"—all have grasped the most important thing in child psychology and the child soul, that which Leo Tolstoy long ago pointed out.

Maxim Gorky recorded his words in this connection:

" . . . (Hans) Anderson was very lonely. Very. I don't know his life. It seems to me he lived, travelled a lot, but this only confirms my feelings—that he was lonely. And for that very reason he turned to children, although mistakenly, as if children would feel sorry for a person more grown-up. Children don't feel sorry for anything, they are incapable of feeling sorry . . . "

And all specialists in the child soul say the same.

And it is interesting to note that it is this particularly which lies at the base of children's jokes and stories.

E. Konochenko writes of Moscow children: "'Grandad, will you see the New Moscow? What do you think, will you still live to see it?' . . . Vladilev asked cruelly. And I see that presently he is confused, understanding a little that he should not have asked the old man that question. Obviously he is a little ashamed and sorry for Grandad. But speaking generally he is not sorry for old men and, when the kids in the yard said that old people would be made into glue, he laughed till the tears ran and asked me slyly how much glue could be made out of Grandad. . . ."

Kimmins writes about English and American children. His conclusions are based on a colossal quantity of statistic material. In the section of his work dealing with "What Little Children Laugh At" we read:

" . . . the unhappiness of someone else, as a cause of laughter in little children, very often lies at the basis of their funny stories. In seven-year-olds they make up about 25 per cent. of the total for boys and about 16 per cent for girls. From eight years the percentage falls correspondingly to 18 per cent and 10 per cent. . . ."

* Russian Folk-Tale Characters: Barmaley is the equivalent of the "Wicked Ogre", Baba Yaga to the "Horrid Witch" and Kaschei the Immortal to the "Superman Hero".

† In Vol. XII, p. 11, of Constance Garnett's translations of "The Tales of Chekhov". Chatto & Windus, London. 1922.

(From W. Kimmins, "The Springs of Laughter", U.S.A., 1928.) But this concerns only *stories*. A description of similar *facts* retain their mirth-invoking effect still later:

"... they are particularly popular in the period of fast growth between 12 and 14 years".

In another work Kimmins, in dealing with "The Child's Attitude of Life" on the basis of an analysis of children's stories, quotes this typical story, attributed to the medium-aged groups:

"... A man was shaving, when there was a sudden knock on the door; this gave him quite a start, and accidentally he cut off his nose. In his excitement he dropped his razor, which cut off his big toe. He called the doctor who bandaged his wounds. After some days he took off the bandages, and it turned out that his nose had been put back on his foot, and the big toe on his face. The man recovered, but it was very funny, because every time he wanted to blow his nose, he had to take his boot off. . . ."

("The Child's Attitude to Life", U.S.A., 1926.)

To complete the "bouquet" one could call to mind a story of Ambrose Bierce. The ruthless "Humoresque" of this author is very apt, for the Anglo-American type of humour, which we are discussing here, arises completely from this same general source!

"The Man and the Goose"

A man was pinching a live goose, when his discontented victim addressed him with the following words:

"Imagine you had been a goose; surely you don't think that a similar operation would be pleasant to you?"

"Maybe", the man answered. "What do you think, would it have given you satisfaction to have pinched me?"

"Of course", was the temperamental, natural although not very foresighted answer.

"Well then", wound up the torturer, "that's just what I experience at this moment!"

The collection of gags in *Modern Times* is completely in that spirit!

"Only children are happy, and that not for long", says wise Vasya Zheleznova in Gorky's play of the same name.

And not for long because the stern "You mustn't" of tutors, and future standards of behaviour, begins to lay their interdiction on the unrestrictedness of children's desires from their very first steps.

He who is unable, in time, to subordinate these bonds and force their limitations to serve himself; he, who having become a man, continues to remain a child—will inevitably be unable to adapt himself to life, will always be placed in a ridiculous situation, will be the cause of laughter, funny.

If the method of the child eyes of Chaplin determine the choice of his theme and the treatment of his comedies, then in the way of plot—it is nearly always the comedy of situations, the childish-naïve approach to life clashing with its stern-grown-up reprimands.

The genuine and touching "Simple Soul in Christ", over whose image dreamed the ageing Wagner, turns out to be none other than Charlie Chaplin, amidst the gutters and side-streets of the East side, and not at all the Wagnerite "Parsifal", surrounded by Bayreuth pomp and before the face of the Holy Graal!

The amoral ruthlessness of the child's approach to phenomenon in Chaplin's outlook appears, with all the other accompanying disarming traits of childhood, within the very characters of the personages of his comedies.

From this arises the genuine touchingness of Chaplin, almost always being able to hold back from pre-conceived sentimentality.

Often this touchingness is able to achieve genuine pathos.

The finale of *The Pilgrim* rings like a Catharsis, when the Sheriff, losing his patience, kicks Charlie in the behind—only after Charlie has not understood the good intentions of the Sheriff—to give him, the escaped convict, the possibility of escaping over the frontier into Mexico.

Learning of the goodness of the child-soul of the escaped convict Charlie, who passes himself as a parson and thereby saves the money of the little village church, the Sheriff does not wish to lag behind in good deeds.

Taking Charlie along the frontier of Mexico, on which side lies freedom, the Sheriff does all he can to make Charlie understand that he should take advantage of this proximity to escape.

But Charlie just cannot understand it.

Losing his patience the Sheriff sends him to gather flowers—on that side of the frontier. Charlie obediently passes over the ditch dividing freedom from slavery.

Satisfied, the Sheriff goes off.

But then the childishly honest Charlie overtakes him with the flowers he has gathered.

A kick in the behind unties the dramatic knot.

Charlie has his freedom.

And the most brilliant finale of all his pictures—a work of genius—Charlie running from the camera with his hop, skip and jump as the diaphragm closes.*

Along the line of the frontier—one foot in America, the other in Mexico.

As always, the most wonderful details, episodes of scenes in the films are those which, apart from everything else, serve as an image or symbol of the author's method, arising from the peculiarities of make-up of the author's individuality.

So here.

One foot on the territory of the Sheriff, the law, shackled feet; the other foot on the territory of freedom from law, responsibility, court and police.

The last shot of *The Pilgrim* is almost a scheme of the inner character of the hero.

The permeating scheme of all conflicts in all his films: a graph of the method by which he achieves his extraordinary effects.

The running away into the Iris Out is almost a symbol of perpetuity for a grown-up half-child in the environment and society of the full grown-up.

Let's dwell on this!

Though the shade of Elie Faure stands in our path, a threatening warning against the insertion of superfluous metaphysics into the Tapdance of Chaplin's boots!

Particularly because we interpret that drama wider, as the drama of the "Little Man" in the conditions of contemporary society.

* The diaphragm in front of the camera lens which at one time produced the effect of the picture being slowly encircled, smaller and smaller till it is totally obscured. Also known as the Iris out.

"Little Man, What Now?" of Fallada is, as it were, a bridge linking these two interpretations.

However, Chaplin himself interprets his own finale, for the little man in contemporary society there is no way out.

Exactly the same as for the little child, who cannot remain as such for ever.

It is sad, but step by step it is necessary to cast off all attractive traits. . . .

— There goes naïvete.

— There goes trustfulness. . . .

— There goes lightheartedness. . . .

. . . and similar traits out of place in cultured society. . . .

There goes unwillingness to consider the interests of a neighbour. . . .

There goes unwillingness to abide by the generally accepted rules. . . .

There goes a curb on the immediacy of a childish egoism. . . .

"Laughing, we part with our past", and so here.

Laughing and sorrowing. . . .

But now let us, for a moment, imagine that a man has grown up and has, at the same time, retained unrestrained infantile traits in their fullest.

The first and most important of them—complete egoism and a complete lack of moral bonds.

Then before us is a shameless aggressor, a conqueror, an Attila. Chaplin, who has since been branded the contemporary Attila, could not help in the past wanting to play—Napoleon.

For long he has considered this thought and this plan.

In this scenario Chaplin does not die on St. Helena. He becomes a Pacifist and succeeds in escaping from the island and secretly returns to France.

Gradually he succumbs to temptation and begins to prepare an insurrection.

However, at the very moment when the insurrection should begin, from the island of St. Helena comes news of the death of Napoleon.

There, you will remember, was his double. But everyone believes that the real Napoleon has died. All Napoleon's plans crash to ruin and he dies of a broken heart. His last words will be: "This news of my death killed me". (Quoted from an article by Chaplin in the Soviet cinema journal, "Iskusstvo Kino" No. 4. Moscow. 1936. pp. 62/62 titled: "On the Silent and Sound Cinema", retranslated from the Russian.)

This line surpasses the immortal telegram of Mark Twain: "The news of my death is somewhat exaggerated".

Chaplin himself describes the film as tragic. The film was conceived but not made.

Napoleon would have stood in the gallery of other Chaplin characters, an image of the broken ideal of infantilism.

* * *

Corresponding to the "Modernist" times of fascism, taking the place of the epoch of Chaplin's *Modern Times*, a significant move takes place in Chaplin's art.

The method of comic effects of Chaplin, unerringly triumphant over the means of his infantile approach to phenomena, suddenly makes a basic change in the character of the persons portrayed (*The Great Dictator*.)

No longer broken as before, but now triumphant, unrestricted and impulsive.

The author's method becomes a graph of the characteristics of his hero.

And at the same time a hero whom the author himself brings to life on the screen by his own acting.

There he is—the "infantile" hero at the height of his power.

Hinkel reviews inventions proposed to him by successful inventors.

Here is the "bullet-proof" jacket.

Hinkel's bullet pierces through it without hindrance.

The inventor is killed instantaneously and falls like useless lumber.

Here is the man with an intriguing parachute-hat who jumps from the top of the palace.

The dictator listens.

Looks down.

The inventor has crashed.

His remark is superb.

"Again you palm off bad quality rubbish on me!" (Translated from the Russian.)

Isn't that a scene in childhood?

Children's freedom from morals is what is so astonishing in Chaplin's vision.

Formerly Chaplin always played the side of the suffering, only the little barber from the ghetto, which he plays as a second role in *The Great Dictator*.

The Hinkels of his other films were first of all policemen; then the giant partner who wants to eat him under the guise of a chicken in *The Gold Rush*, then many, many policemen; the conveyor in *Modern Times*, and the image of the terrible environment of terrible actuality in that film.

In *The Great Dictator* he plays both.

He plays the two diametrically opposite poles of infantilism; the triumphant and the defeated.

And therefore, no doubt, the effect of this particular film is astonishing.

And no doubt particularly because in this film Chaplin speaks with his own voice.

For the first time it is not he who is in the power of his own method and vision, but method and consciously willed, purposeful presentation, are in his adult hands. And this is because here from first to last speaks civil courage, clearly, ringingly and distinctly, the courage not just of a grown-up, but of a Great Man with capital letters.

And thereby Chaplin stands equally and firmly in the ranks of the greatest masters of the age-long struggle of Satire with Darkness, alongside of Aristophanes of Athens, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Francois Rabelais from Medon, Jonathan Swift from Dublin, Francois Marie Arones de Voltaire of Fernes.

And even, maybe, in front of the others, if one bears in mind the scale of the Goliath of Fascist Baseness, Villainy and Obscurantism who is crushed by the sling of laughter of the tiniest in the Pleiades of Davids—Charles Spencer Chaplin from Hollywood.

Hereinafter named:

Charlie, the Grown-Up.

COLOUR AND THE FILM

A plea for imagination by DILYS POWELL, Film Critic of the London "Sunday Times"

COLOUR, IT MAY BE said pretty safely by now, has emerged from the period when it was simply a new trick in the cinema: something for the groundlings. Only natural that its early appearances should have been greeted, by those who found the film an exciting new means of communication, with cold looks. Already once in its life the young art-form had looked like out-growing its strength: when sound and dialogue came, twenty years ago, to threaten the mobility of the camera, to restrict the rhythm and slow down the tempo of a medium which by rights is all rhythm and timing. And just as the purists in the cinema had shrunk from the new potentialities and new responsibilities of the talking film, so the admirers of monochrome shrank from the dangers and opportunities of colour. With justice —on the evidence of nearly every colour film in the period before the outbreak of the war. Loss in definition, loss in solidity, a kind of blurring in narrative values—the only thing colour had to offer at the start, it seemed, was expense.

In the past seven or eight years things have changed. Changed, first of all, technically. Colour is still expensive, but it is no longer necessarily hideous: it no longer substitutes, for the dramatic blacks and whites and greys of the monochrome film, the illusion of an animated Neapolitan ice. Colour values have become more readily controllable; defining lines have grown sharper, the frame of the screen holds depth, perspective. In America this new technical command has been put to two chief purposes: the creation of a richer, slicker, noisier school of musical, and the elaboration of the film of action. To-day, we have reached the point at which the American musical in black and white comes as a surprise.

PURISTS WRONG

If this were all that colour had to offer (though there is no denying that now and then a landscape in a Western, a passage of rhythmic colour in a musical, has its beauties) one might think the purists were right. But now and then in the past few years there has been something to consider beyond this best-seller stuff: there has been a *Henry V*, a *Western Approaches*, a *Blood and Sand*. Two of these examples come from Britain: for this country, handicapped though it has been by shortage of equipment and the general difficulties of war, has shown itself bolder in experiment than Hollywood. Colour has not been reserved for spectacle: nobody can call *This Happy Breed* spectacular. I will admit that, personally, I found the tones in *This Happy Breed* in general too sweet and melting. Yet the fact remains that here was colour being used in a domestic subject, for the depiction of everyday human character; and that the narrative did not suffer in solidity.

I spoke a moment ago of *Western Approaches*: the first of the British semi-documentary films, in the class of *Target for To-night* and *Coastal Command*, to be made in colour. With *Western Approaches* the difficulties were infinitely greater. This time it was not a question of work in the

studio (though studio work, of course, was involved); it was a question of catching and holding the endless and terrifying variety of the sea: the long, sullen, steely swell, the veils of spray, the primrose dawn. Faults there were but the feeling was there: Homer's wine-dark seas; a narrative and emotional effect had been created in colour which would not have been possible in black and white.

A narrative and emotional effect: that is the point. Up to now the tendency has been for colour to use the cinema: the moment must come, if the film is to survive as an art, for the cinema to use colour. When *Henry V* astonished the critics, it succeeded because, almost for the first time, colour had become an essential part of the narrative: the story was told, the characters were presented, in terms, not only of movement and dialogue, but of colour; colour gave edge to excitement, pointed contrast, accentuated rhythm. The dark Rembrandtesque tones of Olivier's face, turning his eyes as he thinks, deepened the mood of his great soliloquy in the camp at night. The brilliant blues and yellows and scarlets of the morning French army heightened the sense of relief from vigil, the sense of released action and fulfilled expectation. And all through this brilliant film the colour of the dresses against the soft neutral shades of the architectural background was so handled as to direct the spectator's attention; to guide his eye; in fact to narrate as the cinema should narrate. Some time ago, visiting the technicolour studios at Harmondsworth, I had the interesting experience of looking, in expert company, at a new print of the opening sequences with the scene in the Globe Theatre and the first entry of the players; and all at once a massing of colours which before had seemed to me merely pretty resolved itself into a deliberate dramatic plan in terms of colour.

Films in which colour and lighting in conjunction are beautiful as well as dramatic remain rare. One recalls the lovely El Greco-ish scenes beneath the crucifix in the matador's room in *Blood and Sand*, and the vicious contrast of the crimson blood spilt in the sunlit arena where the crowds roar outside. And one recalls exquisite passages of romantic colour in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*: a figure seated in a window, and, beyond, a subtle hint of trees and the sea. A hint: for what is needed if the colour film is to improve on monochrome is not realism: not realistic houses and chairs and tables, not pink cheeks, not postcard seas and mountains. That kind of fact can be left to the newsreels (the Victory Parade, after all, can be filmed in Technicolour). The need is for a poetic use of colour—the kind of handling we sometimes find in Disney: the under-water sequences in *Pinocchio*, the pink elephant sequences in *Dumbo*. Disney, of course, can shape his material. He has no tedious human faces, no inconvenient solid objects to deal with. But the cinema of flesh and blood, too, can create and control and shape its material, as *Henry V* shows, as *Blood and Sand* shows. All that is needed is the poetic imagination in those who create the cinema of human life.



Heinrich George, Eduard von Winterstein in a striking scene from a German production "Andreas Schlüter" directed by Herbert Maisch (*Terraflim*). Taken from a book of stills published in Germany in 1943 and available for consultation at the British Film Institute

HEADY COCKTAIL

By HERMAN G. WEINBERG

*Here's to the Seven Arts
That dance and sing,
And keep our troubled planet
Green with Spring.*

THUS DOES BEN HECHT open *Spectre of the Rose*. It is a most exhilarating thing to plunge from the half-lewd idiocy of the average film to such a blend of poetic fantasy and mordant humor as this. At last a film whose dialogue sounds as if it were written by a literate man, a film which is not afraid to rise above the ken of the lowest mental denominator of the so-called average audience. Dealing with the world of ballet and balleromanes, it mixes unabashed sentiment, eroticism and grotesquerie into as heady a cocktail as are the ballets themselves, and if its flashes of wit have not always the brilliance of lightning, and its drama not always the crackle and roar of Jove's thunder, one feels, never-the-less, after viewing it, that a storm has passed—a Spring shower only, perhaps, but even a Spring shower has in it the elements of a Shakespearean tempest. The joy of coming upon a film that appears to have been made for the sheer intellectual fun of making it, *sans* "popular concessions" (tho' I predict it will be very popular), *sans* jejeune compromises in character delineation (tho' it has no "villains" and all its people are charming and delightful)—such felicity can be tempered only by the sad realization, when the bubble bursts (for bubble it is, iridescence and all) that what we have seen was only a mirage. But for Michael Chekov's impresario with the soul of a swallow, Judith Anderson's fin-de-siècle decadence as the faded and bitter *La Belle Sylph*, for Viola Essen's fragile beauty and Ivan Kirov's vertiginous dancing, and for Lionel Stander's blood-brother *rapport* with Hecht's irony, *Spectre of the Rose* is worth your while. George Antheil has outdone himself with his musical score, even tho' it leans heavily on Revel, and the best tribute to it would be to say one cannot imagine the film without just that score. *Spectre of the Rose* completes Hecht's strange cinema-trilogy (*Crime Without Passion* and *The Scoundrel* were the first two, done with Charles MacArthur) and a more provocative and original new film talent has not come out of Hollywood since his advent, with the sole exception of Preston Sturges.

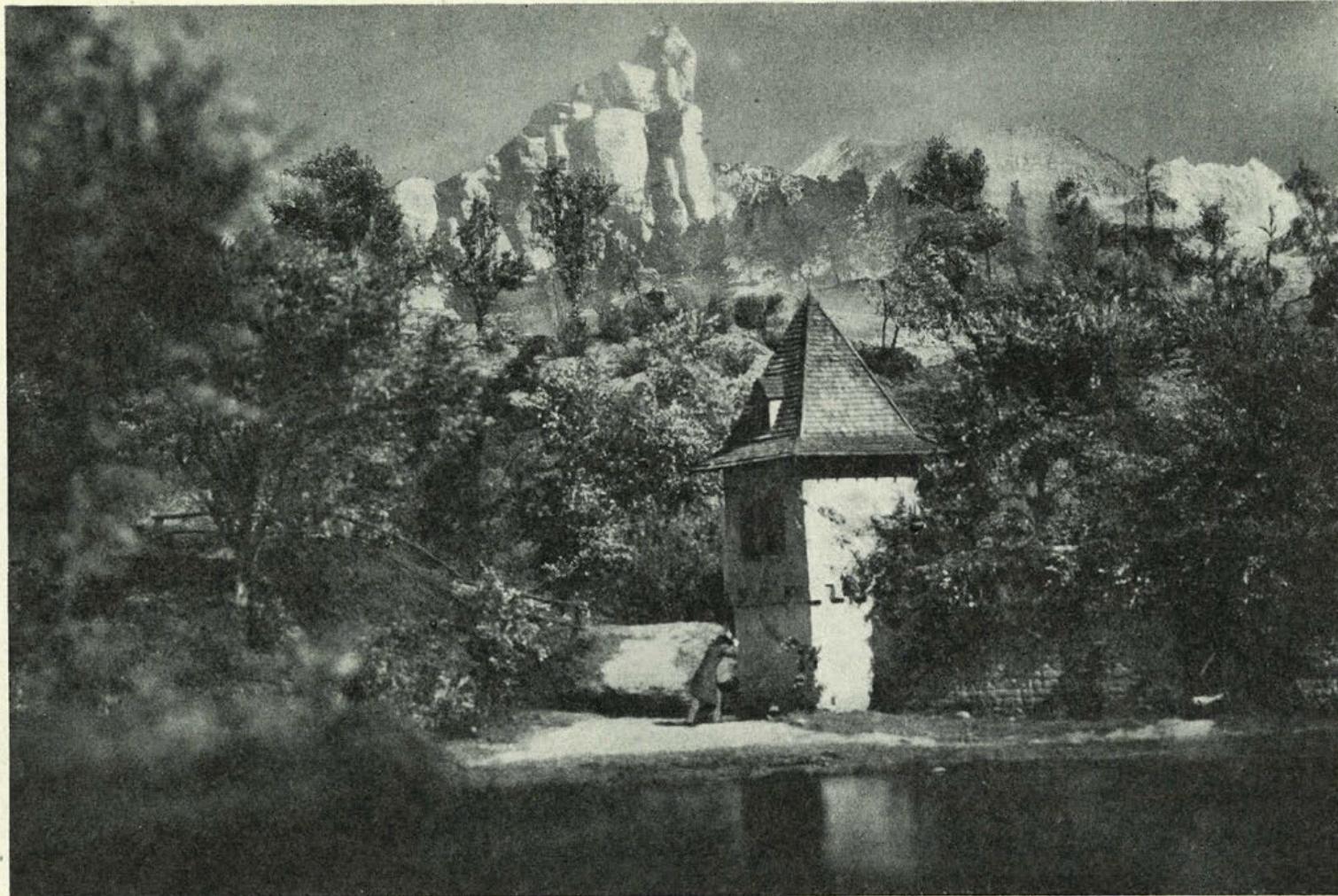
Even Disney's *Make Mine Music* must take second place to it. When it is good, it is prodigious, as is usual with the volatile Disney, such as the fluid geometry of light with which he counterpoints a "jive" session of Benny Goodman's quartet, as mercurial a flight of the spirit as a humming bird. But when it is bad, it tries to duplicate with pen and brush what Tissé can do so much better with his lens (as in *Romance Sentimentale*), or it descends to comic-strip humor. It is most interesting to learn that Disney plans to do a feature with only 300 feet of animation; the rest will be a straight folk comedy, with actors. Once before, when a similar phenomenon occurred (Chaplin's

A Woman of Paris) the result was epoch making. Let us keep our fingers crossed.

Cluny Brown runs a poor third in the past quarter's race. Lubitsch is reported to have emerged from a long illness when he embarked on it. Maybe he was tired, and well might he be, for no one has worked harder and given more to the American cinema, save possibly Chaplin and von Stroheim. But *Cluny Brown* is almost over before we are vouchsafed the first "Lubitsch touch", followed quickly by a second, just under the line. That's a long time to wait for the only reason one would go out of one's way to see this film, simply because it was the new Lubitsch picture.

Recently I read a newspaper item that's a better "Lubitsch touch" than even the desperate "one-two" just before the close of *Cluny Brown*. It dealt with the Wallenda family of circus acrobats whose specialty is a three-high pyramid astride bicycles on a high wire. "*Herman (Wallenda) was torn by the pain of a lost love. His wife, Lee, had divorced him. And, of all places and times to moon over it, he chose the most perilous. He was on the rear bicycle with Joe on the front bike. Between them, suspended from their shoulders, was a pole. On the pole, a chair. On the chair, brother Karl. On Karl's shoulders, sister-in-law Helen. Sixty feet below, the hippodrome. Across the 58-foot wire, on the opposite platform, stood pretty, blond Lee. Herman began to sob. The balance pole swayed dangerously. 'For God's sake, Herman!', shouted Karl. Herman fought off his blues. The pyramid steadied. The bicycles began to move. And in a moment, the Wallendas were taking bows before a big hand from the circus crowd*".

That is as good as the best of Lubitsch or Chaplin, and no scenario writer thought it up. In Duvivier's *La Fin du Jour*, that bitter and beautiful film, a broken old actor says, "Ah, the theatre, what a life!" Whereupon he is answered, "Ah, life, what a theatre!" At this late date, it is hardly new to say that, but life keeps constantly reminding us how true it is. Eisenstein's anecdote about the laughing Chinese children (from Malraux' *La Condition Humaine*) in the Chaplin article in last quarter's SIGHT AND SOUND is another illustration in point. As for a work of art, it must make everything in it seem to be the purest result of will. The "Lubitsch touch" and "Chaplin innocence" were opposite poles of the same axis around which their "theatre-as-life" spun. (Hecht's "theatre-as-life", tho' flashy, is spurious. We are dazzled, but not moved.) Chaplin and Lubitsch were rooted deeply in life, and von Stroheim, perhaps, deepest of all. And yet these three have imbued their art with miracles of humor to complement the sombreness they found in life, transmuting the *alpha* and *omega* of their experience into something approximating "the purest result of will". It is a method of fulfilment (there are other methods, but they seldom result in art). "Wagner told Liszt that had he been happy, he would never have set down a note", wrote De Montherlant in *Costals and the Hippogriff*. "One puts into one's art what one has not been capable of putting into one's existence. It is because he was unhappy that God created the world".



Pays Sans Etoiles

FILM AND UNREALITY

By TUDOR EDWARDS

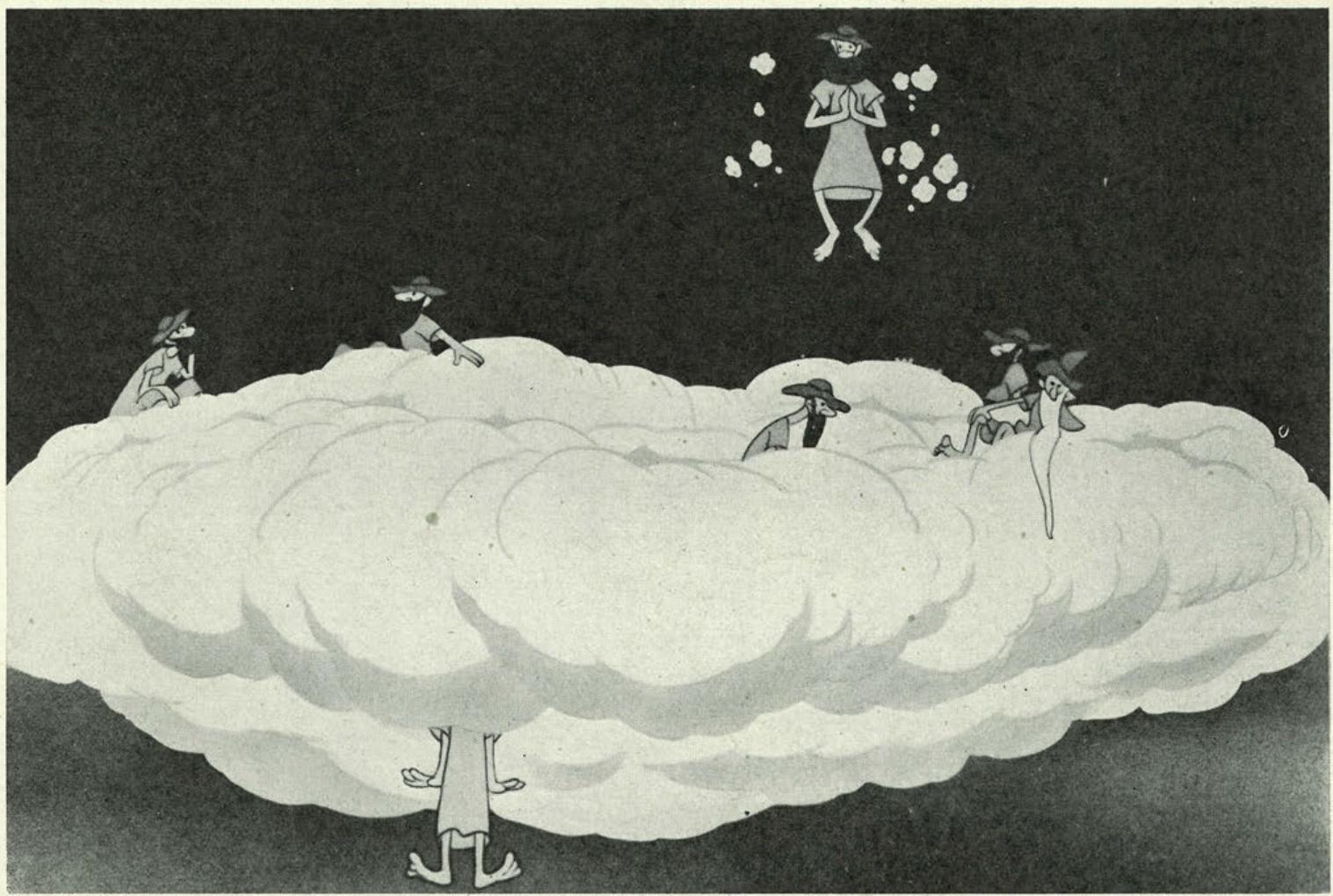
IN THIS UNHALLOWED AGE of mechanised industry, rationed food-calories, atomic bombs and rigid controls, one is tempted to inquire whether the recent emphasis on reality in the arts is justified. We have had seven long years of reality, and the truth is that the public are becoming sick of it. It follows that the same public are soon going to sicken of any artistic medium which reflects such realities and thereby prolongs their existence.

The moral is obvious. If cinema continues to dwell upon such prosaic subjects as factories, oil-fields, bargain-basements, pub-drinking and all the petty domestic and economic troubles which savour of "mass-observation", if, in short, cinema is going to devote itself to contemporary sociological problems, the public will soon sicken of cinema.

This deplorable flair for reality has infected literature, music, painting, poetry and architecture, where the clamour for "function" is all too loud. Once poets wrote of wild violets in a wood, the valleys of the moon and the heights

of Parnassus; to-day they write of gasometers, pylons and bullet-riddled corpses. As though such grim and unsavoury elements do not intrude sufficiently into our daily lives without our being reminded of them when we turn to the arts for consolation.

It may be argued that it is the public who have created the demand for reality. This may have been so in the past when the public were comparatively uneducated, but it is not true to-day. It may be pointed out that the adverse reception of the recent exhibitions of Cubist painting provides sufficient indication of popular taste. On the other hand, how account for the remarkable increase in attendances at symphony concerts and for the popularity of the Jazz idiom (which, in spite of its worst elements and adolescent appeal, is plasticity, without planes or perspective, and which is often the embodiment of dream states)? The most convincing proof, however, is provided by the enthusiastic reception of such "unreal" films as *Outward*



Make Mine Music

"Unreality"

RKO Radio

Bound, *The Blue Light*, *Green Pastures*, *The Lost Horizon*, *Henry the Fifth* and the full-length coloured cartoons of Disney.

When we plead for "unreality" however we do not necessarily mean mere fantasy or escapism. The obsession of film with reality to-day has implications of a much more serious nature. It is, in fact, creating an impasse in the further development of cinema, for celluloid commentary on contemporary social problems is not going to advance either the cause or technique of film one iota.

The cinema remains essentially a visual medium; it is pictorial. But it need not be *only* pictorial; indeed, if it is to make a serious contribution to the community it must overcome its purely pictorial limitations and take upon itself the function of interpreting, which is of course closely allied with the function of creating.

And here we are at the crux of the matter. For one of the chief bogies of the film-producer is this business of expressing subtle nuances of thought and portraying certain mental dream-like states. The novelist has the power to do this, but how is film to adequately reproduce such introspective novels as those of, say, Marcel Proust, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce?

The insistent clamour of the industry to have its own script and scenario writers to write specifically for film requirements presents too easy a way of backsiding and avoiding its obligations. Nor is it enough to transmute the simple action novels of popular writers into celluloid, for the psychological works of the serious novelists have a primary right of expression and interpretation. Producers should learn how to handle Aldous Huxley and Virginia Woolf instead of avoiding them. It will pay.

One loses count of the number of good films in which weakness of structure is often due to attempting to express abstract ideas in concrete form. The expression of the sub-conscious was creditably handled in some German studios as far back as the early nineteen-twenties, but these experiments lapsed into mawkish exaggeration and morbid pathology, with some outstanding examples of ingenuity in the psycho-analytical *Caligari* and the psychological studies of Fritz Lang.

Since this period cinema has resorted to such artifice as optical distortion and non-parallelism. It is significant that these methods have the approval of the Surrealists. Surrealism is itself a form of psychological research, the exploitation of the subconscious mind, and its aims are to break down the barriers dividing dream from reality. This raises the highly-problematical speculation as to whether Surrealism can assist film in its quest for unreality. It has already been claimed that the lyrical element of Surrealism is to be found in Disney's *Silly Symphonies* (as it is to be found in Lear's *Nonsense Verse* and in the book of *Alice in Wonderland*).

Certain difficulties however are immediately apparent. While Surrealism can produce a free mental association of ideas which might be valuable in film, its forms are too obscure and unintelligible to the general public to be of cinematic value. Again, while it is "advanced" it is in many ways a throwback, since it contains elements of mythology, medievalism, romanticism and even Victorian Gothic.

But there are already some signs of compromise and clarity in the hitherto turgid Surrealist stream. It is a far

cry from the hypnotic *Caligari* (1919), perhaps the earliest of Surrealist films, and *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), that terrifying and grotesque film of Dali and Bunuel, to the latest films in the same idiom. *L'Age d'Or*, the film shown in Studio 28 in Paris in 1930 (when it was taken off by the police), is already dated and out of favour. Of this film Salvador Dali himself wrote in a manifesto: "My general idea in writing with Bunuel the scenario of *The Golden Age* has been to present the straight and pure line of 'conduct' of a man who pursues love in face of ignoble humanitarian patriotic ideals and other miserable mechanisms of reality". Consequently, the film was a paranoiac nightmare of violence and blasphemy, and it is little wonder that its exhibition here was forbidden.

With the doctrines and precepts of the Surrealists, however, we are not directly concerned. It is in their method and approach that we may find something of value. Cavalcanti realised these possibilities in 1925 when he made *Rien que les Heures*.

L'Age d'Or was followed by Jean Cocteau's *Le Sange d'un Poete* (1931). Then there was a hiatus until L'Herbier produced his comedy-nightmare *La Nuit Fantastique* (1942). Cocteau followed this with *L'Eternel Retour* (1943). More recently, MacOrlan, the painter and associate of Picasso, has completed the scenario of *Francois Villon*, directed by Swoboda, while Picasso himself, so it is rumoured, is contemplating doing the décor of Lorca's *Yerma*, which Le Rideau de Paris may produce.

The tendency of French studios to avoid contemporary France is indicated in such films as the above and others like the medieval legend *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (1942). It may be that France finds nothing inspiring in this age of frustration and political chicanery. Indeed the human race does not always wish to see itself as it is—for heaven only knows it presents a pathetic enough spectacle at times.

The vogue for Surrealism spreads further westward. The recent film *Spellbound*, produced by Selznick and Hitchcock and based upon the novel *The House of Dr. Edwardes*, is a notable example. Here the dominant theme is the discovery of Gregory Peck's film identity by dream analysis, with many fantastic dream sequences designed by Dali. The British film *I Know Where I'm Going* also had a few suggestions of unreality, as in the dream wedding of Wendy Hiller to Big Business and the brief sequence where steam rises from a gentleman's top-hat as a train leaves the station.

Here however we have to distinguish between Surrealism and mere symbolism, for though widely divergent in aim they are often akin to the eye. Motive, it would seem, is everything. The steam rising from a man's top-hat may be one way of indicating that the man is obsessed by trains, but it is much more likely to be a quite irrelevant and whimsical gesture which is pointless and ends in farce or at best a facile humour.

Cinema's quest for the introspective, for unreality, is thus beset by the complex machinery of Surrealism, symbolism, non-parallelism and almost every other ism. Obviously restraint must be used, lest, like the sorcerer's apprentice in Disney's *Fantasia*, we become swamped by our own curiosity.

But let us have no more of this emphasis on reality, for after all are we not "such stuff as dreams are made of"?

THE GANGSTER COMES HOME

By ROGER MANVELL

ACTION AND SENTIMENT are the root of popular entertainment. Only the advanced and thoughtful mind can stand the extended contemplation of mental processes found in a writer like Proust. But though action and sentiment are the best prompters of the successful novel, play and film, it is only too easy for them to forget their common sense, to lose their contact with the salty earth of humankind, and to create a special pathology of self-indulgence. Action loses itself in superficial violence, while sentiment declines into the dropsy of sentimentality and emotional hysteria.

War makes over-expression in these ways fashionable and even respectable. It is to be expected, therefore, that the behaviour of the gangster would to a certain extent be allowed to enter the home. What is fair in war becomes fair in love. The novels of Cain (*Double Indemnity*, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*) reflect this feeling, and have a certain technical mastery which makes the behaviour of his dangerously puerile characters appear smart and sophisticated in the exciting ways of crime. Even the detectives are inverted gangsters.

TEN FEET OF BLOOD

It must be admitted that such novels tend to promote excellent cinema technique. They have characters who know and say what they want without any pernickity considerations for gracious living. They have tension, the momentary glimpse of the chewing jaw before the jagged glass of the broken bottle puts ten feet of blood on the screen. These people, holding their breath for murder, in the darkened pent-house, the alleyway, the bouncing screaming limousine, are undoubtedly photogenic and cinematic because their careers depend on the same split-second timing which is the idiom of motion pictures.

Domestic gangsterism has broken out since the war, encouraged perhaps by a few earlier pictures of the outstanding merit of *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder for Paramount). Here everything was finely cut, MacMurray's insurance agent who skips every other sentence with an effectively acidic scowl in close-up, Barbara Stanwyck's blonde mantrap leaning in display of her sinful limbs, Robinson's cunning integrity and all the clap-trap of dishonest law which surrounds the American insurance racket. The stupid cruelty, the social illiteracy of these moneyed creatures of fiction is incredible unless we also accept a desire in the hearts of the semi-lawful men and women of Hollywood's world audience to become selfish individualists themselves and push the law aside to gain their own slice of wealth and power.

Film after film has in the end the same moral background as *Double Indemnity*. *Scarlet Street* (a moral film indeed with its exposé of the relations of pimp and harlot), *The Blue Dahlia*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Gilda* and *The Postman Always*

Rings Twice (weakened considerably because the sensuality of the sordid love-affair has to be glamorised to make the story palatable for sentimental audiences) all exploit the enjoyment of watching displays of violence, hysteria and tears, and of people behaving with no sign of social or individual responsibility. *Scarlet Street* alone stressed the sense of social judgment which should inevitably be involved when themes of such moral irresponsibility are undertaken. The others made magnificent hay while the going was good and then clamped down at the end in conformity with the Production Code with unconvincing sheepishness. The domestic gangster picture, this new phase in the Hollywood product, often makes fascinating cinema (the gambling scenes in *Gilda*, the attempted murder that failed in *The Postman*, the tipping body of the dead man which opens *Mildred Pierce*, the relation of the pimp and harlot in *Scarlet Street*), but the pay-off is nearly always less convincing than the sin itself. And this, I would maintain, is socially dangerous in a world suffering from the severe after-effects of the moral distortions of war.

As if to make up for this delinquency the pictures of sentimental goodness are prominent. *Bad Bascomb* becomes good Bascomb, *Sentimental Journey* satisfies yearnings from the sweet spirit world with a horrible acceptance of mawkishness, while the group of Roman Catholic films like *Going My Way* (the successful prompter of a new box-office line) makes it difficult to distinguish between priest and crooner, except that we are aware that Good is being fulfilled while at the same time the box-office is being tickled. *Going My Way* had certain obvious merits marred by painful sentimentality; the moral issues were clear, though it is probable that Binghood rather than priesthood was the final idol of the millions who saw and loved the film. But the moral issues are far less clear in *The Bells of Saint Mary's* where money is obtained by Good from Evil in strange ways, whereas in *Yolanda and the Thief*, with its strong Catholic background, the intrusion of bogus religion should alarm Protestant and Catholic alike. And in these films there is little fundamental cinematic quality to give them entertainment value such as the gangster pictures possess, though individual scenes in *Going My Way* contained some cunning dialogue, and *Yolanda* some beautifully contrived dances.

MENTAL MELODRAMAS

There was a time when psychiatry was the privilege of the smart few who were bored with fussing over their sickly bodies and thought the new psychology a fetching substitute. But it was no good making films about psychiatry because films had to satisfy the curiosities of millions of people. More recently, and especially during the war, psychiatry has been brought to the attention of everybody, so that films can safely embark on such phenomena as

schizophrenia and amnesia without more than the usual popular misunderstandings. The last quarter has seen the psychiatrist as the central figure in many films, both British and American, and indeed there is a certain psychological flavour to the domestic gangster pictures, since they are dealing for the most part with people in a pathological condition. *Somewhere in the Night* is an amusing example of the psychological picture, with the pleasant twist of a man who has forgotten his true identity and spends his time tracking down a big-shot criminal only to find he was his own pre-war self. But in *Spellbound*, Hitchcock's pretentious mental melodrama, the paraphernalia of cinema psychiatry is taken more seriously, with attendant psychiatrists on the payroll and credit titles. The result is entertaining and irritating by turns. Practically the whole cast is made up of psychiatrists. One of them is Ingrid Bergman trying to look like a scientist (with symbolic spectacles), but underneath the façade she is of course a woman with sex urges and maternal yearnings, so that she goes for the new Director of the Psychiatric Institute in a

big way in a field. Fortunately he is not really a psychiatrist, but a man suffering from the delusion that he is a murderer, and consequently possessing homicidal tendencies with razors. Chased by the police and in most unsuitable places Dr. Bergman plumbs the depths of Gregory Peck's distorted mind, and it all culminates in a spacious dream designed by Salvador Dali with limp wheels like pancakes, and assassins with white-bandaged heads. Again, the dream and chase are cinematic enough, but in spite of the psychiatric advisers, the psychological structure of the film is so simple as to be plain phoney. In effect, a far-fetched melodrama is dressed up with a few psychological tricks, so that the usual detective's clues are replaced by a series of stock-in-trade dream-symbols. Hitchcock's directional skill and camera-tricks (the revolver shooting the audience, for example, when the villain commits suicide), the build-up of the advance publicity and a wonderful array of credit-titles to impressive music, all combined to make *Spellbound* look like it ought to be the Hollywood prize picture of the year.

Which it may well be, as things are now going.

CONTINENTAL SEASON

DISAPPOINTING

By ROGER MANVELL

THE BURIAL SERVICE has been read over *Le Jour se Lève*, Marcel Carné's and Jacques Prévert's pre-war masterpiece which a small American company wants to buy to remake into this or that. The winds of wrath blew with such ferocity at the funeral that death may be reprieved. One should acknowledge the space given by many critics to attack the vandalism of the screen that allows masterpieces to be destroyed so that substitutes may live. *La Mort du Cygne* was loss enough. It is intolerable that *Le Jour se Lève*, which in this country could offer no box-office threat to any American version of the same story, should be removed from the minority public and film student alike. Anthony Asquith, as President of the Association of Cine-technicians, has with his customary awareness of both artistic and social considerations, added his shaft to the critics' fire. This vandalism must stop before the cinema destroys more landmarks of its own greatness in the voracious search for story-material.*

The season has been disappointing, with only revivals bringing distinction to the Continental films shown. *La Symphonie Fantastique* showed the deplorable tendency of Hollywood to write down the lives of distinguished men to novelette level. Jean-Louis Barrault, a sensitive and interesting actor, proceeds from episode to episode of the Berlioz mumbo-jumbo. The Nazis have left a sinister influence in French films which they financed and so

encouraged to turn increasingly to box-office pattern in the absence of American competition. Although only the cream of pre-war French production rose to the standard which is commonly accepted with artistic awe in this country as "the French film", the position now is that the cream is given little chance of rising in these days of economic dislocation in the French film industry.

ONLY A BUBBLE

The French films which are new to London, *Fric-Frac* and *Premier Rendezvous*, bear no comparison to those films which have been revived, such as the ill-fated *Le Jour se Lève*, *La Bête Humaine* and *La Fin du Jour*. The programmes of the small revival cinemas, like the Hampstead Everyman and the Tottenham Court Road Carlton, are reminders of past greatness, or at least distinction. *Fric-Frac* has the French grace and polish, the easy virtuosities which cost a Fernandel, an Arletty and a Michel Simon no pains at all but what results from their carefully acquired finesse. This comic trifle of so many thieves and one honest man is an example of the iridescent bubble of French comedy, protected and unpricked for an hour and a half by the light good taste with which the French can handle dubious themes. But it is no more than a bubble, easily destroyed by the rain and the traffic of Oxford Street. *Premier Rendezvous* is just as dubious and just as good, using only one Hollywood trick which lets down the French side when in a dark lane

* A copy is being acquired for preservation in the National Film Library of the British Film Institute.—EDITOR.

the nervous professor gets a glimpse of the stockinginged thigh of Danielle Darrieux in such a way that we suspect the worst of him. But otherwise the delicacy of this story of an orphan girl who is inveigled into a rich boys' college by an elderly professor of literature who corresponds with her through a newspaper advertisement, depends for its existence on the merits of Fernand Ledoux and Danielle Darrieux. He gives to the part a sincerity beyond its merits, while she uses her charm with such dexterity and lightness as to be in herself a school for film actresses in other countries.

COMPLACENT RUSSIA

But this is not enough to represent France. We should by now have seen *Goupi Mains Rouges*, *Les Visiteurs du Soir*, *Les Enfants du Paradis*, *La Nuit Fantastique*, *Le Ciel est à Vous*, at least, and be preparing to see *La Bataille du Rail*.

Similarly, the Soviet authorities are with irritating complacency showing lesser war film after lesser war film, as if the only thing that mattered was to work them through. Now is surely the time to show us the cream of Soviet films interplayed with revivals of those classics of the pre-war period which large numbers of the public in the specialised class want to see again. Films like *Wait for Me*, *Military Secret*, 6 P.M. and so forth are tedious and indifferent pictures which are gradually killing even the specialised public's taste for Russian films. They strain the loyalty of those prepared to be loyal to the once-high reputation of Soviet cinema. Only one feature film has emerged from this unexciting display with something of the old merit, *Artamonov and Sons* (directed by G. Roshal). This study of the career of the family of a liberated serf whose son becomes a wealthy factory owner has all the quality which fine character acting and the sense of period atmosphere achieved in films like *Lermontov* and the films on the life of Maxim Gorki, though it does not equal them since the subject and the characters are unsuitable for the poetic treatment which distinguishes these other films. Still, it has its remarkable moments, such as the scenes at the end when the decayed and quarrelling family stoop and die among the debris of their symbolic possessions, their portraits and their furnishings, swept aside by the events of 1917. These scenes have the touch of imagination which has made the Russian cinema great.

ONE FROM MEXICO

With the blessing of M.G.M., and the curse of pedestrianly dubbed sound-track in Americanese, comes a beautiful if rather amateur film from Mexico, *Portrait of Maria* (directed by Emilio Fernandez with Dolores del Rio). The new sound-track replaces what one imagines to have been the soft Latin intonations which would have doubled the film's quality. But then, the teeming members of the greater public must be served, and since they have to spell out written words, titled films are too quick for them to grasp. *Portrait of Maria* is spoilt by the banal conception of the distinguished painter who is supposed to tell the tragic story to a devout lady journalist, but with his pipe in hand he looks far too like a gentlemanly English seducer than an artist possessed of the inner fire. The story he tells is the suffering of a beautiful outcast and her lover caused

by the cruel prejudices of the conventional peasantry, in spite of the protection offered them by the weak and rather amateur local priest. Eventually Maria is stoned to death because the artist painted a model's nude body beneath a portrait of her head. The beauty of this interesting film lies in the sincerity of the central story, and the integrity with which Maria and her lover are played. The photography of backgrounds is not too beautiful to be convincing that hard work has to be done by everyone to make a living. Maria herself walks barefoot with the grace of a woman long used to the smooth carriage of her body without the artificial hobble of the woman with high heels. That this simple picture with such obvious faults should seem so good is a further reminder that we are sunk in the routine of Hollywood artificiality. We should see more of the films made by countries whose production is outside the American-British monopoly.

BOOKS OF NOTE

L'Invention du Cinema, by Georges Sadoul. Editions Denéel, 19, rue Amelia, Paris. 17s.

THIS IS THE first volume of a history of the cinema which is at present being written by Georges Sadoul, the eminent French film critic and historian. This first part covers the invention of cinematography from the optical toys of the early nineteenth century to the successful projection of motion pictures on to a screen as a commercial form of entertainment, towards the close of the century.

An immense amount of research has been necessary to disentangle the story of this fascinating period, already half-forgotten and obscured by bitter controversies. M. Sadoul presents the results of his investigations with scholarly care, and a scrupulous regard for authenticity. The detail in which he cites sources, in fact, makes a striking contrast between this and the only other comparable work, Terry Ramsay's *A Million and One Nights*. However, in preferring historical accuracy to the journalistic love of a good story, which characterises Terry Ramsay's classic, M. Sadoul has lost none of the glamour and excitement of this intriguing period. His book, besides being the first comprehensive and reliable account of the birth of motion pictures, makes extremely entertaining reading. It fills a gap in the literature of the cinema, and we look forward to M. Sadoul's second volume.

R.L.

Kleines Filmlexikon: Kunst, Technik, Geschichte, Biographie, Schriftum, herausgegeben von Charles Reinert in Verbindung mit J. P. Brack und P. F. Portman (Benziger, 1946).

THIS IS A most useful book which contains information on most matters connected with the cinema from definitions of technical terms to biographical notes on screen personalities. There are 15 pages of excellent bibliography of books on the film, also international. These are followed by three pages of technical terms, the equivalent of the German being given in English, French and Italian. The American production code is also given.

M.E.C.

THE SITUATION IN JAPAN

By H. H. WOLLENBERG

IN CO-OPERATION WITH the Occupation authorities, the American Motion Picture Export Association have set up an agency for the distribution of selected American films in Japan. The West is knocking at the gates of the Japanese cinema, which so far has been a self-supporting entity of a highly original and individual structure.

The cinema has been the most popular of all branches of entertainment for very many years. Roughly 2,000 cinemas were counted in 1941 including some 350 in the capital; the latter sold no less than 500 million tickets at their box offices during the year.

The heavy demands of this market were met by a total annual production of normally 650 films, the output of the Japanese production companies, big and small.

The three principal producers are the Toho company with studios at Kinumatura, the Nikkatsu company with studios at Tamagawa, and the Shochiku company with studios at Ofuna and Kioto.

All these data, although significant, present only the surface. The Japanese film industry, although working (and prospering) on commercial lines, has a distinct purpose behind its activities. In Japan, the cinema has been a form of Art primarily harnessed to the task of raising the educational and moral standards of the population. The underlying moral conceptions, of course, are specifically Japanese.

TWO SCHOOLS

The Japanese Cinema presents two distinctly different branches, or schools, of production. The one is the so-called "Modern" film, corresponding with our fiction feature films; it is, in fact, largely influenced by the Western cinema, still developing, and fully accessible to our understanding.

The other branch or species of Japanese production is called the "Classic" film. It originally represents the counterpart to our Documentary, but its development has been rather different. In point of fact, the "classic" constitutes a film species of its own, typically and exclusively Japanese. It rests upon the traditions of the Kabuki drama. The ancient legends and customs of Japan, adapted to the screen, supply the material. Minutely reconstructed sets, decorations, and costumes are combined with superb exteriors. A certain relationship with our medieval mystery plays is apparent.

For a foreigner, the Japanese "classic" is difficult to appreciate. Even highly-educated Japanese sometimes fail to understand the full meaning of a "classic's" story unless they care first to read its synopsis as printed on the cinema programme.

Influence and importance of the "classics" has been enormous. The large studios of the Shochiku company at Ofuna, in the county of Kanagawa, near Tokio, are exclusively devoted to "classic" production. Twelve directors, 380 actors and extras, all of them under exclusive

contracts, over 500 technicians and craftsmen are here employed day by day, since the studios have been spared from any war damage.

Most striking experience to the visitor—in contrast to Hollywood, Denham or Epinay—is the atmosphere of the studios in which the "classics" are produced. It is a family life atmosphere. The young women of 18 to 25 you meet here, smiling with their calm and reserved faces, are actually actresses, sometimes well-known "stars" of the Japanese screen. At twenty-five, like any other girl working in a factory or anywhere else, the "star" will be thinking of getting married and of devoting herself to her home exclusively, as Japanese tradition will have it.

Her histrionic style is as distinct from Western ideas as is her personal appearance. Soberness is the prevailing characteristic of their style of acting. For the very reason of that traditional Japanese soberness, and on account of the extreme youth of most artistes, it is mainly the directors' task to train them to professional skill.

An example may illustrate the specific features of Japanese performing and directing:- The subject of the film in question is the life story of a girl who becomes a geisha in order to repay her father's debts: a story which, in itself, is quite trivial in Japan. But it affords the director an opportunity of shooting sequences abounding from a realism which, though never touching the vulgar, reveals the most vehement emotions. This is achieved with a soberness of expression and gesture, which seems the exclusive property of Asiatic artistes.

Significant for the part played by the "Classics" in Japanese life is the fact that normally from 30 to 40 millions yen are spent on an annual production of approximately a hundred classics in the studios at Ofuna and Kioto which have specialised in this field of production. As to the foreigner, the classics present a precious opportunity for those who endeavour to become initiated into the mysteries of the Japanese way of life.

The present situation, of course, is bound to present a widely different scenery. The production programme for the current year, which is being carried out by six companies, is reported to allow for a total of thirty films altogether. Production and distribution are under strict Allied control; any reference to war, to revolt or intrigue, any glorification of militarism in one form or another, any hint at "propaganda" are radically eliminated. "Modern" films, Japanese and American, fill the present bill, with "musicals" prevailing. Of those 2,000 cinemas in 1941, 860 are in operation in 1946. Two hundred films are at their disposal for exhibition as compared with 2,400 films of all kinds in 1944. After careful "screening", a list of 500 "approved" films, selected from the productions of the last four years, has been compiled by the authority concerned for reissue. This roughly is, according to reports from various sources, the actual position of the Japanese cinema in its present transitory phase.

CELLULOID IN ARABIA

The Arabian Film Industry is still in the hands of its own peoples and there are rumours of developments on the banks of the Euphrates. The Egyptians are abounding in enthusiasm says

COLIN REID

ONE SWELTERING DAY in the early summer of 1942 I journeyed thirty kilometres from the metropolis of Cairo to the Misr Film Studios, which are situated near the Pyramids of Guizeh and can rightly be termed the mecca of Arabic film production. I was to meet Salah Abou Seif, the studio's montage expert and a former pupil of René Clair. After a brief visit to the montage department where Salah and his assistant were engaged on cutting the final stages of the latest feature production, we went to the projection theatre to view some "rushes". Thrown by the latest type of Zeiss projector on to the screen of this well-fitted theatre, these rushes were most interesting, particularly so to me as they were the first samples of Arabic films in the making that I had seen. A comedy scene was being enacted between an elderly, bald-headed Pasha and a barber in a hairdressing salon. Salah remarked to me "As Fernandel is the George Formby of France, so this actor is the Fernandel of Egypt", and I had to agree, the likeness was very real.

THE MISR STUDIOS

The rushes over, Salah showed me round the premises. We visited the Recording Theatre, big enough to house a full symphony orchestra, the carpenter's shops, the Art department, where a scaled model of the Pyramids was being made for a film about the history of this world-famous landmark, the projection room, where the very latest Zeiss equipment had been installed just before the war, and the laboratories. In each and every department I was astonished at the excellence of their equipment and the competence of the craftsmen. Finally we came to the two Sound Stages. The first of these was only big enough to hold one set, but the second compared favourably in size with the average sound stage used in this country. The smaller one contained the interior of a poor Egyptian's house, which had been used for the previous day's shooting. Work had been completed on this set and so we proceeded on to the big stage, where shooting was then in progress on a kitchen scene in a wealthy Egyptian household. The scene was a straightforward one, in which Abdel Wahab (a Pasha's son) entered the kitchen and asked his young lady (Aila Ratib) who was assisting her cook to prepare a salad, if she would leave her work and accompany him to the Yacht Club. No time was wasted, and, after three action rehearsals, only two takes were required before the shot was "in the bag". I remained on the set to watch the rest of the day's shooting and was impressed with the work of Monsieur Charkass, the Hungarian cameraman, and the way in which the unit worked as a team. I was told that in all productions they used the Western Electric sound recording system.

Apart from the Misr studios there are six smaller studios, but four of these are poorly equipped. The owners of all these studios have recently sent representatives to Paris, London and America to buy modern equipment: cameras, lights, apparatus for back projection, camera cranes, etc.

There are one hundred and fifty film production companies in Egypt. Many of the producers are Palestinian, Syrian and Irakian merchants.

EGYPTIAN PROSPECTS

Contrary to rumours, the Arabian film industry is still in the hands of its own people. It is known in the Orient, however, that Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer have a scheme to build a modern studio in Cairo to produce Arabic films with Egyptian actors and American technicians. In addition, a big company has been formed to make films in Bagdad. Its owners are British and Irakian. It was recently rumoured that this company was going to launch out and spend five million pounds on film production but I have learned that there is no truth in this statement.

To return to the Egyptian industry, what are the future prospects of this youthful concern from an æsthetic viewpoint? A detrimental factor to its natural progress is that its audiences are too easily satisfied. Give the Arab some pretty girls, dancing, music and singing, he is quite satisfied and will return night after night and gloat over the same film. The twenty per cent. intelligentsia, however, demand something on a higher plane and the technicians of the industry are more than keen to satisfy them and, at the same time, improve the quality of their productions. Above all do they need competent scenario writers to write stories suited to their own characteristics and environment. They are much too fond of taking successful American films and adapting the stories for their own productions. The results are usually very little like the originals and quite unsuitable. The last of these adaptations to be completed at the Misr studios was *Waterloo Bridge*. In a small studio in the back streets of Cairo I watched one afternoon a scene from an Arabic version of *Romeo and Juliet*. The actor who portrayed Romeo wore a turban and carried a sword glittering with jewels! All the settings were transformed into Arabian style, and, to crown everything, special songs had been composed for a singing star who was being introduced into the picture!

There is no shortage of talent in the Egyptian industry and much of the acting is good. Any shortcomings in the technical field are due to the present paucity of equipment. The Egyptians are abounding with enthusiasm and are keen to learn about the art of film making from other countries and to co-operate internationally in this respect. In the course of time they may do well.

FILM AND LITERATURE

D. H. LAWRENCE said it in 1920. ROGER MANVELL invites readers of SIGHT AND SOUND to contribute other references to the cinema from the giants of literature who may have been aware

THE CINEMA has now been an active element in British entertainment for some fifty years. This coincides with what has been a very productive period in British literature. Writers like Shaw, Wells, Bennett, Galsworthy, Joyce, Huxley and Virginia Woolf, to mention only a few of the classically conventional names, have produced a large part of their collective work during this period. A number of them, especially Shaw and Wells, have frequently acknowledged the importance of the cinema. Huxley made his famous reference to the future of cinema in "Brave New World". Joyce was for a time manager of a cinema in Ireland, but this more practical contact was unsuccessful.

The fiftieth anniversary is as good a time as any other to search in the literature of the past half-century for references to the cinema and its place in the community. It is especially interesting if the writer recognised during its earliest years the importance of this new art. Readers are therefore invited to find passages in the writings of authors with whom they are familiar and send them to the Editor of SIGHT AND SOUND. Meanwhile, D. H. Lawrence supplies us with a singularly apt quotation in "The Lost Girl", a novel published in 1920. Since, however, it deals with the reaction of the Midland miners and their womenfolk to the early variety shows interspersed with films, the passage must refer to Lawrence's observations prior to 1912 when he left that part of England. It occurs on pp. 179-181 in Secker's Standard Edition: the argument between Alvina and Mr. May concerns the virtues of the live variety show which he likes best, as against the theatre which has gone over completely to films:

"Why do you think that is?" he said.

"I don't believe they like the turns", she said.

"But look how they applaud them! Look how pleased they are!"

"I know. I know they like them once they're there and they see them. But they don't come again. They crowd the Empire—and the Empire is only pictures now: and it's much cheaper to run". He watched her dismally.

"I can't believe they want nothing but pictures. I can't believe they want everything in the flat", he said, coaxing and

miserable. He himself was not interested in the film. His interest was still the human interest in living performers and their living feats. "Why", he continued, "they are ever so much more excited after a good turn than after any film".

"I know they are", said Alvina. "But I don't believe they want to be excited in that way".

"In what way?" asked Mr. May plaintively.

"By the things which the artistes do. I believe they're jealous. . . . I'm sure that these common people here are jealous if anybody does anything or has anything they can't have themselves".

"I can't believe it", protested Mr. May. "Could they be so silly! And then why aren't they jealous of the extraordinary things which are done on the film?"

"Because they don't see the flesh-and-blood people. I'm sure that's it. The film is only pictures, like pictures in the 'Daily Mirror'. And pictures don't have any feelings apart from their own feelings. I mean the feelings of the people who watch them. Pictures don't have any life except in the people who watch them. And that's why they like them. Because they make them feel that they are everything".

"The pictures make the colliers and lasses feel that they themselves are everything? But how? They identify themselves with the heroes and heroines on the screen?"

"Yes, they take it all to themselves—and there isn't anything except themselves. I know it's like that. It's because they can spread themselves over a film, and they can't over a living performer. They're up against the performer himself. And they hate it".

Mr. May watched her long and dismally.

"I can't believe people are like that—sane people!" he said. "Why, to me the whole joy is in the living personality, the curious personality of the artiste. That's what I enjoy so much".

"I know. But that's where you're different from them".

"But am I?"

"Yes. You're not as up to the mark as they are".

"Not up to the mark? What do you mean? Do you mean they are more intelligent?"

"No, but they're more modern. You like things which aren't yourself. But they don't. They hate to admire anything that they can't take to themselves. They hate anything that isn't themselves. And that's why they like pictures. It's all themselves to them, all the time".

THE CHILD AND THE CINEMA IN EIRE

By KELVIN L. O'DWYER

Until recently on the staff of the National Film Institute of Ireland

CONSIDERABLE INTEREST has been aroused in Eire in recent years in the subject of the child and the cinema and the resulting problems—psychological, cultural and moral—which are involved. Two groups, the Irish Film Society and the Irish National Film Institute, have been responsible for directing the attention of the public in Ireland to the potentialities of the motion picture as an audio-visual educational aid and the importance of providing suitable film entertainment for children. The introduction of legislation to protect the child cinema-goer has also been urged.

First in the field was the Irish Film Society, when in October, 1942, the Council of the Society formed a "Children's Committee" to study the problem of the child in relation to the cinema and to encourage the use of the film as an educational medium. The problems facing the Committee were manifold. While a rigid film censorship exists in Eire, there is no system of classification and children soon develop the undesirable habit of indiscriminate cinema-going. Cinema exhibitors made no effort to cater for their younger audiences beyond including a serial instalment in their programmes once a week in their suburban and small town houses. The use of the projector in the classroom was practically unknown in day schools.

CILDREN'S MATINEES

The first work of the Committee was to enter into negotiations with the Film Trade for the provision of special Children's Matinees. These talks resulted in a number of experimental film shows being arranged in some suburban Dublin cinemas on Saturday afternoons. The programmes, which were specially selected, usually consisted of a feature film, a cartoon, a short comedy and an interest film. These Children's Matinees proved very successful and received good support from the Press.

An intensive publicity campaign was then started by the Children's Committee for a proposed Teachers' Group for the benefit of teachers interested in the use of the film in the classroom. An inaugural meeting was held at the Mansion House, Dublin, at which Mr. Oliver Bell, President of the British Film Institute, lectured on "The Film in the School".

Three months after the Children's Committee had announced their intention of forming the new group, the membership had risen to seventy teachers representing some forty Primary, Secondary and Vocational schools.

A number of discussions were held on the Child and the Cinema, at which the methods adopted by other countries in dealing with the problem were carefully studied. It was finally decided that the Teachers' Group should be subdivided into two other groups, a production group and a library group. A list of all the projection equipment available in Ireland was made by the production group and the making of a 16 mm. silent documentary on the woollen industry was planned.

For the second season (1943-1944) an elaborate course was arranged by the Children's Committee for the Teachers' Group. Teachers were asked to attend children's film matinees run by cinema proprietors in conjunction with the Children's Committee and to make a report to the secretary on the programme shown and the child-reaction.

A nucleus of films for a Central Educational Film Library was collected and further additions of pictures approved by the Group were to be made from time to time. A small library was also started of books and pamphlets on educational films, which gave special attention to Language Teaching, History, Geography, Nature Study and Civics, subjects in which the Group are particularly interested.

Lectures on the use and care of the projector and general film appreciation and production (from script to screen) were also included in the course.

A summer school, lasting a week, was organised at which teachers could study in detail the various aspects of educational films. Practical demonstrations of teaching with the classroom projector were given. This summer school is recognized by the Department of Education and has been so successful that it has now become a regular feature of the school curriculum.

The National Film Institute of Ireland is another body which has done much to encourage the use of the film in the schools. Originally a voluntary organisation, it was founded in 1943 to provide a source of films suitable for hiring out to schools. To this end a library of films on such subjects as Geography, Physical Culture and Youth Training, Popular Science, Religion, etc., was built up. Schools without a projector could hire one from the Institute and obtain the services of a projectionist.

The Institute later became affiliated to the Irish Red Cross Society and subsequently acted in the capacity of an Advisory Film Board to the Red Cross and distributed their films for the Anti-Tuberculosis campaign.

Several films, including a Gaelic football final news-reel and a religious drama *Footprints of Matt Talbot*, were produced by members of the Institute.

In February, 1945, the Irish Government Information Bureau announced that a grant-in-aid of £2,000 per annum was to be made to the Institute. The grant is to be mainly devoted to the purchase of educational films to form the foundation of a National Film Library. Substantial orders have already been placed in this country, Canada and the United States. Three new Bell & Howell sound projectors have been acquired and it is proposed to put one or two Mobile Units on the road in the near future to give film shows to groups of associated members of the Institute which have been organised throughout the country.

The activities of the Institute have also been extended to cover instructional courses dealing with every aspect of the cinema, the regular publication of a film bulletin and the setting up of a Technical Information Bureau.

FILMS FOR SCHOOL

There is a tendency for enthusiasm to be carried too far and for the producer and the teacher to drift poles apart. In this article Mr. J. FAIRGRIEVE, who has used the film in school for years, points out certain misconceptions

IT IS PRETTY OBVIOUS that most of the films which might be thought to be of use in school are in fact quite unsuitable: they are used only because, though they are not good, there are none better. This is not surprising for most of them have been used for other purposes, but very few even of those specially produced for teaching really fill the bill. What is the matter?

There are two misconceptions at the bottom of the trouble which, if rarely stated, are often implied in discussions about teaching films. One is that it is sufficient for a child to read a book once or for a teacher to say a thing once or for a film to say and show a thing once for a child to learn the thing read or said or shown; there is also the corollary that the thing is assumed to be learned when it is "said back". The second is that "the schools of the future" will in effect be picture theatres with a continuous run of pictures from 9 till 4. The two misconceptions may exist together. In parentheses it may be suggested that the second idea can scarcely be practical politics at the present time when it is remembered that scarcely any films exist that are at all suitable for a weekly show for children's entertainment let alone for their instruction.

CILDREN MUST TAKE AN ACTIVE PART

These two misconceptions are, however, rather symptoms of the trouble than real troubles in themselves. The mistake about films in school is much more fundamental. It is, in fact, due to a lack of understanding of what happens in school. The plain simple fact is that children go to school to learn—something, many things. They go to school to learn, not to be taught, though many teachers do not realise the difference, to learn actively, not to be taught passively. This implies something which for short may be called study, a certain concentration of the mind on the job, whether the pupil is making sand castles in a nursery school, trying a shot at goal in a IV Form or thinking out a problem in higher mathematics in a VI Form. Very occasionally the learning is instantaneous but normally a very great deal of hard work is necessary. A child does not learn how to do arithmetic by watching a master put a series of figures quickly on the blackboard—and the blackboard is the real cinema of the classroom—while he talks about what he is doing. Indeed if he were to imitate a good many educational films he would talk about anything else but the figures he is writing. Besides the careful, slow blackboard demonstrations in which, in contrast to the showing of instructional films, the members

of the class take their full part as encouraged by master or mistress, each pupil has to get down to the job and do work for himself—work. And what is true of arithmetic is true of everything else that is done in school.

A MEANS TO AN END

"But", say the producers of films for schools, "we thought that the idea was that the children should enjoy themselves". Quite true. It is, but not in the way that producers seem to interpret the statement. In fact, the misconception here coming into the open has done a very great deal to negative the value of films in school. The end in coming to school is learning, by hand and eye and brain—work. The boy and girl, as indeed do we all, work hardest at the things from which they get enjoyment. The job of all teachers is, somehow, to get their pupils to enjoy what they are doing, but they must be doing something. It is the kind of enjoyment that is got from playing a hard game not that of lying in the sun half asleep. Granted that the latter is in itself advantageous it is not the kind of thing that children come to school for. Enjoyment is a means to an end not an end in itself. Now it is not too much to say that there are very few films where enjoyment is used as a means to that end, where the pupils do hard work because they want to do hard work. Nor are there many films that teachers can use to get the pupils to do hard work. In practically all the nominally educational, instructional and teaching films there is almost no incentive to work, or no work can be done with them, or both.

FEW PRODUCERS KNOW

In a good number of such films the reason why no work can be done is, first, that far too much is attempted and children can take in only a very little at a time. The aim of all teaching films should be to show a few things and to show them clearly, *not* to cram in as much as possible into short elusive shots. Few producers know this; probably the Colonial Film unit is the most successful in producing films with a tempo slow enough for children. Quick shots, shots from unusual angles, however much they may appeal to adults just confuse children and prevent work. German educational films seem to have a slower tempo than British. At the worst they are so slow as to be boring, but at their best they are long enough on the screen for the children to see what is happening, to see it happening in its setting and this in a way that is impossible in all but a few British films.

IMPORTANCE OF CURRICULUM

Then there is a second way in which films may prevent work being done. One of the very first things against which a young teacher is warned is "lecturing", i.e., doing all the talking. In that case the children are not working, and if anyone should be talking it should be the children. Yet we have films still being made for classroom use with commentary* and approved by people who ought to know better. It may be suspected that teachers who use such films find it easier to let the motor zip than to get the children to work. Films required are those that can be used by teachers for work and not merely for show.

All these things supply very good reasons why so many teachers still look askance at films in the classroom. There are other equally important reasons.

There is a whole series of misconceptions, which may rather be called ignorance, of the importance of the curriculum in determining which films can be used and which films cannot be used. To be really useful and acceptable to teachers a film must provide work which will fit the curriculum of the school. Such films as fit into the curriculum of the school have an enormously greater chance of being used than have those that don't so fit, however good technically the latter may be, however well they may appeal to the mentality of the children and however suitable they may be in providing work to be done. Even that is not so simple as it looks; there are unsuspected snags. To take one small and insignificant example: a film showing the growth and harvesting of groundnuts in Nigeria or the Gold Coast has a very much better chance of being used than one on groundnuts in any of the many other places where they are grown. Further, when it comes not only to selecting the subject but to treating that subject in what might be called the school way, producers do not seem to have the foggiest notion of providing films that fit exactly into the schemes of work in schools. If a film does not really fit then it becomes a "background" film and we know what that means. In a picture theatre any kind of films may be shown in any order from week to week; the public just come and look. In schools the curriculum calls the tune and it has to be *that* tune and no other.

THE TIME AVAILABLE

In fact, in this as in most other matters having to do with school films, the less producers of educational films know about the production and showing of picture-house films the more satisfactory will the films they make be both for schools and for themselves.

Then, perhaps, even more important than all else, is the ignorance of the time available for films in school, not only teaching films but all films. I have already (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Vol. 10, No. 40) examined in some detail the possibilities of the time allowed for the teaching of one subject, and the time that can be given to films in teaching it. What I say here is from a slightly different angle. In each school year something under, and usually well under,

50 hours may be allowed for the teaching, revision and repeated revision of an ordinary school subject such as geography. As time is necessary for the use of maps, still pictures, blackboard work, writing, handwork, wireless and other activities to supplement the fundamental reading and oral lessons it is obvious that it is impossible to give much time to films. Probably 10 hours a year would be a very outside limit and even 5 a rather hopeful estimate. And even this does not mean that films can be shown with a total length of 10 or even 5 hours. Experience shows that a film lasting 7 minutes when run straight through may and usually does in a teaching lesson with a second or a third showing take up 45 minutes if real use is going to be made of it, and work done with it. This reduces very greatly the film footage that may be used in a year. If the proportion given above holds as an average it means that *films running for under an hour will suffice for a year*. Even if this is increased by 100% or 200% there is not the time for films that those predicate who do not know schools. Two conclusions may be drawn. One is that to get the best value out of available seconds, teaching films must be short, very short. The other is that there are too many even now of *good* background films and a plethora of so-called background films which have no place in school at all and are shown only to the detriment of good teaching and good film appreciation.

MANY SHOULD BE SCRAPPED

In practice the term "background films" means all sorts of films, good, bad and indifferent, some specially made for schools, some made for picture theatres, some propaganda or advertisement made to be shown by anyone who will show them but none of them useful for providing *work* at all adequate to the time given to them. The place for such of these as are any good is probably the school hall, but even then it is obvious that they take time away from other things, and as such films normally take up more time than teaching films that left for work is farther reduced. It may be suggested that the place for background films is in children's shows in picture houses. If they cannot hold their own there—and *very few* could do so—it is very doubtful whether they have any business to be shown in school at all. In fact, we require a list of "N.B.G.s" to be blacklisted and scrapped.

SUMMARY

- (a) Children go to school to learn, to work.
- (b) Films must supply material to be worked with.
- (c) Material should be such as can be used to get the children to like to work—
 - (i) method simple and clear;
 - (ii) lecturing by teacher or film to be avoided.
- (d) The curriculum and details of the curriculum are important.
- (e) There is little time for films; so
 - (i) films used must be few;
 - (ii) films must be short;
 - (iii) background films take up much time.

*NOTE: Of course, films with music are quite impossible for work.

NO ONE LOVES KNOBS

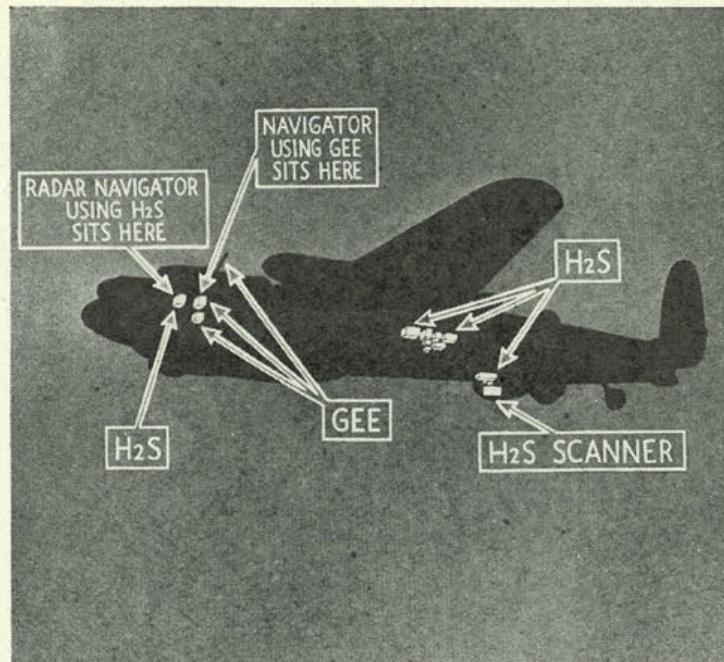
Tucked away in Malvern a little known Film Unit has been making little known but highly important training films for Radar. Here H. D. WALEY describes some of the difficulties

THE RADAR TRAINING FILMS made for the R.A.F. by the T.R.E. Film Unit have so far, with one exception, been aids to operation, not maintenance. The Radar operator must know how to work his apparatus, but need not know, except in very rough outline, how his apparatus works. Accordingly these films have tended to comprise three parts, representing three stages in operational proficiency. Part One is pure theory—it tells in the broadest possible terms what the apparatus is meant to do, and on what general principles it sets about doing it. Part Two mixes theory with practice—it teaches the use of the various controls and the method in which the cathode ray tube display (and other indicating devices) may be interpreted. Part Three is pure practice—the interruptions of explanatory comment are cut down to a minimum and the aim is realistic reconstruction of an actual operational flight.

Four ingredients preponderate in these films:—
(1) Knobs. (2) Cathode Ray Tube displays. (3) Diagrams. (4) Aircraft in flight. No one loves knobs, but no one can exorcise them from operational films on electronic subjects. In order to shoot knobs in as lively and interesting a manner as possible our cameraman has had a special "tracker" made, incorporating rails along which the camera can be pushed towards a rotatable table, on which the object to be photographed is set. In general, however, the photography of knobs raises questions which are artistic rather than technical.

The photography of C.R.T. displays, on the other hand, raises a number of technical problems. Owing to the low luminosity of the trace special instruments are required to estimate exposure, and synchronisation between camera-motor and C.R.T. scan has often to be ensured to obviate strobing effects. Filtering is often necessary to obtain the desired balance between afterglow and trace. The cinematographer may, however, be consoled for these difficulties by the reflection that only a moving picture can do justice to the peculiarities of C.R.T. presentation.

Diagrams necessarily play an important part in Radar films, because most of the events which lead up to the appearance of the significant speck of light on the tube-face are, in fact, invisible. So they must be presented to the eye in visible symbolism before they can be grasped by the mind. Half the unit's numerical strength is constantly employed on diagram work. Three animation cameras are available—a 35 mm. camera complete with every refinement, a 35mm. camera suitable for titling and simple animation, and a 16 mm. camera in a simple set-up. The aircraft-in-flight shots are the jam with the pill. They are easy on the eye and frequently valuable to the script-writer,



who wonders how he is to fill his screen while the commentator gets some necessary, but non-pictorial, remarks off his chest.

Two production teams work simultaneously, one on 35 mm. and one on 16 mm. film. The 16 mm. unit claims the added attractions of colour, but in many respects has to make improvisation and ingenuity compensate for the absence of commercial production equipment. The 16 mm. unit's ambition, now nearing fulfilment, is to equip itself with editing and sound-recording facilities designed and built within the establishment. The main aim of the films has been to accelerate training of operators for apparatus being newly introduced into the Services. The films had therefore to be made between the time when standard apparatus was available—for it would have been misleading to photograph an experimental prototype—and the time when bulk instruction of operators was ready to begin. To ensure the punctual completion of the films within this limited period production planning of an extremely detailed kind has been necessary, and, to ensure the accuracy of technical information, close liaison between script-writer and subject-experts. The eternal problem of the Film-Producer's relation to the Teacher has also needed watching, and representatives of the appropriate Service training organization are called into consultation when the draft script is completed and again before sound-recording.

Since it is more possible to plan the commentary with precision than the pictures—and precise planning is essential to punctuality—our productions have tended necessarily to shape themselves as illustrated lectures, somewhat cramping to the style of the cameraman.

This I believe to be an inevitable characteristic of such technical films as require to be made within a limited period for a specific purpose. But we console ourselves for our divorce from the film beautiful by reflecting that we are mated to the film useful.

We believe that whatever type of film we may in the future be called on to produce our tradition of close adherence to schedule and close collaboration with experts will be an asset.

THE NEW SCHOOLS MUST HAVE CINEMAS

By MICHAEL GARETH LLEWELYN

WE ARE APPROACHING a new spate of school-building. Just as the Hadow Report in the twenties preshadowed the rise of a creditable crop of senior schools, so will the Education Act of 1946 originate vast schemes for new schools and colleges to meet the educational and cultural needs of the people, literally from the cradle to the grave. From nursery to adult community centre will these new provisions range. That is the prospect unless the so-called economists will arise to wield again the axe of parsimony.

But this time there is this difference; while the new standards of space and site are vastly more generous than those considered sufficient in pre-war days, the well-known handicap of the supply of building materials and labour being to-day far below the present demand makes the new renaissance of school building a thing of shreds and patches. We must have the schools here and now, yet at a time when we are least in a position to supply them in proper variety and purposefulness of design. There is the dilemma, and therefore the danger of the "temporary" or "prefabricated" school buildings turned out on a production belt being too stereotyped and inflexible to permit of wide-ranging usages and provisions such as, for example, dramatic stages and cinemas.

Yet these aids to culture are essential in any modern school as they are indeed in the county colleges for youth and the adult education and community centres visualised for older people. There is a danger that the brave new schools may become just an agglomeration of separate blocks rather like a military camp because, at present, this is the only practical method of construction open to the school architect. There is clearly need for prefabricated sets being designed with a wider variety of sections to provide for corner units, verandahs, roof lighting, higher sections for stages and certain crafts rooms.

But whatever the future prefabricated designs will provide, at present we are largely confined to one pattern of what is called "the standard hut". This has a span of 24 feet and can be built up to any reasonable length in standardised sections of 6 feet. The inside height to the apex of the roof (which is free from intrusive cross-members) is about 12 feet, and an examination of a longitudinal section of one of these huts will therefore show that it would only be possible to fit a screen about 8 feet wide so as to clear the heads of a seated audience. This would limit the length of the projection room for practical seating purposes to perhaps 36 feet. This means a small audience. It implies the restriction of the cinema to a one- or two-class unit, that is for 30 to 80 persons at a time. For teaching purposes this will be an advantage, but it would preclude displays to the school as a whole when the school is large.

A double section of 6 feet, 12 feet in all, must be added and separated from the auditorium by a brick or breeze block partition. This would form the projection room and re-winding room, each with its direct access to the open air. The cinema of prefabricated standardised huts can

thus be designed to meet a limited need and serve also for epidiascope projection of stills, film-strip projection as well as, perhaps, for a radio listening room.

The black-out of such a projection room in a prefabricated school will need careful consideration. So often is this done as an afterthought and improvised rather than scientifically designed. If the windows are provided, as is usually done, in alternate sections, it ought to be possible to fit external shutters which fold back on to the blank wall and become an attractive feature of the elevation. These shutters should be of the light-trap, ventilating type where wide baffles overlap and cut off most of the light but at the same time permit of the necessary air movement. This is very simply done, yet how often omitted. Obviously the inner surfaces of these baffles should be painted a dead dull black to absorb all reflected light.

In this way the use of optical aids in schools constructed of prefabricated standardised huts can be introduced, encouraged and preserved until the time comes when schools can again be "purpose built", each part being dimensioned and planned to serve its specific purpose. For class use of optical aids the emergency construction will serve quite well and even if the projection apparatus is at present not easy to obtain, designers of these hutment schools, or additions to schools, should include the provisions for its installation when available.

There is a further point in this connection to which reference can usefully be made, and that is the inclusion of projection facilities (and dramatic stages) in the new village schools. The grouping of all children over 11 or so into secondary schools of various types may mean in some instances village schools too large for their remaining purpose. Here may be an opportunity for making an auditorium with projecting room and stage to serve village community purposes as well as primary school needs.

Or when new village schools are designed (often to serve grouped villages) they should include provision for adults and youths as well—resting chairs, a library, a reading room and a hall for public meetings, the staging of plays and the projection of films. Mr. Henry Morris has shown what can be done in his Cambridgeshire village colleges. These, however, are for senior children. We want a new type of village school where the needs of infants and juniors are combined with those of the localised community. It only needs thinking out these needs in time and planning and furnishing the new schools accordingly. And in any such plan the inclusion of a cinema is as essential as any other more conventional provision.

When this is done widely, then our supply of educational and cultural films will receive the stimulus of steady demand and we will be able to bring the film to the people of the countryside rather than that the people should come to the films in the towns. Here is a new problem, but it is also a stimulating opportunity.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP!

An article provoked by Ken Annakin's argument in the Spring SIGHT AND SOUND. The author is a practising teacher, PAMELA FURNEAUX

TO DEFINE A GOOD educational film is beyond me, but one ideal to set before the makers of it is that it should bring to its audience (child or adult alike) what it cannot have as a personal experience, due to limitations of time, geography, the human eye, etc. This must be achieved by film technique combining selection of material, sequence of shots, the addition of diagrams where they help to build up a clear picture—and a commentary or more probably lack of it. As Mr. Annakin so rightly says "there are different ways of teaching a subject" but, may I add, there are different ages to which it must be taught; different circumstances and surroundings in which it must be taught; and, by far the most influential factor, different people who must teach it! His idea of a library, with a full and careful index, is obviously excellent—so that the individual teacher can prepare his own film in the same way that he now prepares his illustrations and diagrams. But certain subjects are repetitive, and films dealing with these should be acquired as a permanent reference library belonging to the school. Others would only be needed temporarily and could then be returned to the library and broken down again. Here I suspect trouble over finance. It should not cost a prohibitive amount to arrange matters so that the teachers can make their own temporary films, but the cost of the average documentary film made by experts is far and away greater than the cost of the film made for educational purposes by the amateur, as Mr. Annakin points out. Cost apart, which does the job best?

REASONS FOR FAILURE

The present supply of educational films is both inadequate in number and, with a few exceptions, poor in quality. Some films that are good photographically are spoiled by their sound tracks. Music distracts, and the commentaries are sometimes ludicrous. Let me illustrate this last point. I was once showing an excellently photographed film of pond life. The audience was rapt, in serious appreciation, until a gay voice said, "Now look at this fish with a funny face, talking to a water snail!" or words to that effect. By all means let us have the expert, taking his subject seriously; but you do not need to be a biologist to recognise that such a commentary destroys the value of a film as a piece of teaching apparatus. Children are usually discerning critics and impatient of those who underestimate their intelligence. The only alternative is for the teacher to supply an impromptu commentary, using the stop lever, as hire costs per day do not allow of previous running through of the film. On the other hand some sub-titles serve a useful purpose, either to draw attention to what is coming, or simply as a rest pause in the effort of concentration. Far too many, however, appear to be put in to cover the absence of a shot. Perhaps this is due to the prevailing practice of making educational

films from the left-overs of advertising and other commercial films.

Other films, whose photography is good, fail because they are made by people who are not aware of things like attention span; the intellectual standards of children; the time needed for a child to take in the picture, and so on. A film that is successful with sixteen year olds is possibly of little use to eleven year olds, but, at present there is often only one film available on a certain subject, so you have to use it and attempt to edit it verbally! On the other hand, many so-called educational films are an insult to the intelligence of any child. Somehow or other a middle course must be found between the Scylla of filming down to a child, and the Charybdis of judging a film by adult standards.

CHILD CRITICS

In the latter connection I feel I must query Mr. Annakin's statement that "the cheap, silent films such as made by the Dartington Hall Unit certainly get over their lesson" and ask him what proof he has of this? The film in question was "Rivers" which I have used myself in a school with a series of classes of different ages. My own feelings were that it was so good that it was a thousand pities it wasn't better. To my mind, some of it was excellent, but soil erosion was scantily treated and in other parts not long enough was given in which to absorb the facts shewn. I also lamented the crudeness of the animated diagrams. But the children were far more critical, and what emerged from questioning them afterwards opened my eyes. Either they were "put off" by the crudeness of the diagrams or in other cases accepted them as a standard by which to judge their own work—both undesirable reactions. Next, by no means all of them grasped the fundamentals of the film, even though they all saw it at least twice, and had opportunities to stop it as it went and to ask questions, though, as I have already said, it was one of the best films I have ever used. It all goes to show the danger of judging a film by the impression it makes on oneself, and in this connection it would be well to add that the film expert is in a worse position here than the teacher in that he is the possessor of a trained eye.

As far as I can see the position is this. The greater part of films used in schools could be made by the teacher, treating the film as a piece of teaching apparatus, not necessarily an artistic whole. But here we come up against the fact that it is our job to heighten a child's artistic appreciation as well as to teach it various facts. We all know the care we take over choosing textbooks—not only for their accuracy but for the quality of their writing and illustrations; can we deny the influence of the film is probably far more direct and forcible than that of a book?

What we need, therefore, is the artistic and technical skill of the professional film maker combined with the professional knowledge of the teacher, producing the whole film that will become the library copies. In this way the standards of the teacher's own films may well be raised, and the child will be exposed to the influence of film at its best, and will, we hope, absorb unconsciously from it some sense of beauty and artistry, in the same way as it benefits from the pictures on the classroom walls. It is in this connection that I regard as pernicious Mr. Annakin's inference that the extra quality needed for documentary films to bear comparison with the commercial films of the cinema is not needed for educational films which he describes as illustrative. The influence of the film is enormous—and we owe it to the children that the best in every way should be given to them. Their taste is being formed—consciously or unconsciously—throughout their school life, and it is idle to deplore the general low standard of culture and taste unless we fight against instruction being divorced from artistic standards of the highest.

Now we come to my last bone of contention—that technicians should be removed to the field of documentaries when they become interested in technique as such, in order to ensure spontaneity and freshness. I suggest that it is the purpose of the educational film to fulfil the special needs of the teacher, whose job it is to keep spontaneity and freshness as an essential part of his teaching, and that a high degree of technical ability, imagination and artistic appreciation should be necessary to achieve this.

I am delighted to meet enthusiasm among the documentarians over the making of educational films, but cry a word of warning. As Mr. Annakin says, "The film is an excellent medium for teaching a subject" *but*, all subjects are not suitable for filmic treatment. Look at a catalogue of educational films and see the choice available—then visualise what *could* be done, and then—go carefully. The film cannot take the place of the teacher, and should not attempt to, but, it can and should be the open door to imaginative and effective presentation of much of the world's beauty and knowledge, and could open the eyes and enrich the minds of future citizens. But, it is not out of place to remark here that the scope of the film being adapted for use in other countries by the translation of its sub-titles, blandly overlooks that films made for home consumption presuppose many facts that are not necessarily already part of the knowledge of the foreign audience-to-be. However, I wish Mr. Annakin and those like him, all power to their elbows, and can assure them of the support and help of thousands of teachers, and an almost unending list of requests and suggestions as to subjects and the widely varying treatment of them. And last, but by no means least, I can promise them the freely expressed and minutely critical appreciation of the children themselves, remembering always that children and schools are not alike and that there is room for many variations on the same theme, giving scope for the individual film maker side by side with the individual teacher. Neither can do the job satisfactorily by himself, so let's get together and get on with it.

THE VISUAL EDUCATION CENTRE, EXETER

By G. PATRICK MEREDITH

1. POLICY

EDUCATIONAL CHANGES OF A fundamental character entail changes in current educational thought, changes in teachers' habits of work, changes in the training of teachers and, in some cases, changes in school equipment and architecture. Such enterprises are slow in maturing and are not to be undertaken without bold, hard and honest thinking.

Visual Education is just such a change. This is the belief which dominates the policy of the Visual Education Centre. The Centre is, therefore, not overmuch concerned with minor technical problems of passing interest, though it does not neglect these. It has its silent and sound film projectors, lanterns, episcopes, epidiascopes, several film strip projectors, micro-projector, stereoscope, an assortment of screens, a dark-room and photographic equipment, and the materials and implements for chart-making. But any film studio would be far better equipped and staffed. Therefore the Centre has never attempted or claimed to produce visual materials competing in technical quality with those of the experts. Instead it has been content to concentrate on regional and national services and on research.

2. SERVICES

The Centre has perforce confined itself to those activities

which its particular constitution and resources made possible. These have been as follows:—

- (i) It has given a basic course in visual education to some 180 teachers-in-training during the past five years.
- (ii) It has provided over 20 lecture-courses or week-end schools for practising teachers in the south-west.
- (iii) It negotiated the establishment of the Regional Film Library of the South-West at Dartington Hall.
- (iv) It has projected some 2,300 reels of films to audiences too numerous to list here.
- (v) It has dealt with over 1,800 written enquiries from all over the British Isles, the Empire, and many foreign countries, as well as uncounted enquiries by telephone and personal visits.
- (vi) Lectures and papers have been given to courses under the B.F.I., the E.H.A., the London School Films Association, as well as to the Royal Photographic Society, the British Psychological Society, the Royal Society of Medicine and the Scientific Films Association, and to many other audiences in different parts of the country.

(vii) Articles emanating from the Centre have appeared in *SIGHT AND SOUND* (Summer, 1941, and Winter, 1942), "Documentary News Letter" (No. 1, 1944), "Journal of Health Education" (July, 1943), "Nature" (September 16th, 1944), "Aeronautics" (April, 1945), "Journal of Photography" (August, 1945), "The Schoolmaster" (April 11th, 1946).

In addition the "Bulletin of Visual Education" has appeared six times; a report entitled, "Progress in Visual Education" was in such demand that the stock is exhausted; and a monograph, "Visual Education and the New Teacher", was published in January of this year. Much unpublished material has also been circulated. All these publications have been in response to requests and, even so, many requests have had to be refused.

(viii) The Centre has acted as the headquarters of the Film Council of the South-West, arranged all its meetings, written all its minutes, reports and memoranda, negotiated grants for it, handled all its correspondence and accounts and prepared its annual balance-sheet. It has stimulated the formation of local branches of the Film Council in various centres in the S.W. region. It has given technical assistance to teachers in difficulties with their projectors.

(ix) It has maintained contact with many film producers, film-strip producers, publishers, museums and other sources of supply and circulated a considerable amount of information about them. It has given service to many of the committees set up since Visual Education became the focus of attention. It has collected an assorted, though still inadequate, variety of visual materials for training, demonstration and loan to schools.

(x) It has pursued research, not only on the use of visual aids in school but also on the fundamentals of visual expression. It has applied these principles extensively in mathematics (the results of which are now in the press) and is extending them to other subjects. The principles themselves are being presented in a series of papers to the British Psychological Society, two having already been given. They will eventually be published in book form.

(xi) The Centre felt compelled to raise its voice in the recent controversy concerning the supply of educational films and there is evidence that its warning to teachers not to tolerate the imposition of a centrally dictated programme of film production, unrelated to real educational needs, has not gone unheeded. This controversy brought it both friends and enemies. It welcomes both.

3. RESEARCH—THE EXETER APPROACH

The Centre adopts an approach to Visual Education which is essentially linguistic. So far-reaching are the implications of linguistic developments in the last twenty years that those who ignore them run the risk of being regarded as either woefully out of touch with modern thought or intellectually negligible.

Educational activity may be thought of either in terms of *drama* or in terms of *communication*. The two approaches are equally necessary, equally valid, and are, indeed, complementary. The dramatic approach is handled with great dynamism by the documentary producers. The problems of communication have been relatively neglected. For this reason, and by taste, aptitude and opportunity, the

Visual Education Centre has concentrated on the problems of educational communication. This naturally entails special attention to logic, semantics and problems of visual symbolism on the one hand, and to the psychology of perception on the other. The exciting and surprisingly practical outcome of the modern developments in symbolic logic, particularly in the U.S.A., the sequel to a long line of logical, psychological and linguistic development in which the names of Leibnitz, Boole, Russell, Wittgenstein, Neurath and Carnap, of Spearman, Lashley, Koffka, and of Ogden, Hogben, Korzybski and Bodmer stand out, forms the background to these investigations. The Exeter researches are concerned with the application of semantic principles to the design of visual symbols and conventions which a child can understand. The results will be published in due course.

4. FINANCE AND THE FUTURE

Disappointment with the inadequacy of the above achievements compared with the real needs of the situation and the aspirations of the Centre is nowhere keener than in the Centre itself. A few words on the reasons may not be amiss. Many demands are made on the Centre which betray a failure to appreciate the special conditions which obtain in a university enterprise. Universities are not under the Ministry of Education, and although a substantial proportion of their income is derived from the University Grants Committee this is naturally devoted to the needs of the established departments. An experimental expansion is only possible with private grants or endowments. Through the good graces of the British Film Institute a small independent income for the Centre has been raised from a group of public-spirited sponsors. Some of them are film-producers, but it is only fair to say that none of them has attempted to grind any axe through the Centre. The views of the Centre are its own views expressed without fear or favour. Any other condition would be intolerable for a university college. The disadvantage of this system is that it has entailed a vexatious expenditure of time and energy in the quest for additional grants as the work has expanded, thereby slowing down the expansion. When it is pointed out that *the total expenditure on the Centre in the five years of its existence has been less than the cost of production of a single documentary film its inadequacy may be better understood*. When it is further pointed out that until quite recently the Centre was but a euphemism for a one-man job (apart from clerical assistance and, for a few months, the services of a half-time research assistant), which was *in addition to his regular college work*, the failures and errors in this hobby of his may perhaps be condoned. But now that Visual Education may be said to have "arrived" it is clear that the Centre cannot continue on its present basis. Its finances have no guarantee of permanence, its very existence is nowhere officially recognised, and it may well prove that the original conception was too ambitious an undertaking for a provincial university college. But the Centre, the Film Council and the teachers' groups at least have the satisfaction of seeing basic notions on Visual Education, which were hammered out several years ago in Exeter, now in general circulation.

*"Deform'd, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable,
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them."*

EDUCATION · RELIGION · SCIENCE

Some letters to the Editor

Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,

In the Spring issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, Ken Annakin advocates the production of a large percentage of the 16 mm. educational films, for which the need is so great, by "amateurs" that is, by the schools and institutions who are going to use them themselves.

There is one very vital point, however, which needs stressing. It is no longer correct to associate "amateur" and "16 mm." automatically! There exist a growing number of professional units which, like the Dartington unit, produce direct in 16 mm., and this method has enormous advantages over the 35 mm.—16 mm. reduction process in the case of classroom films. Very definite first place is still assumed at the moment by the question of cost. A unit like this could produce a first-class ten-minute sound film for as little as £240, while a similar silent film and one in Kodachrome would cost half and double this sum respectively. This is still less than one fifth of the cost quoted for one of Ken Annakin's productions. Both silent and sound films have their distinct and individual functions to perform in the educational field, and it is well known that some educational subjects can only be successfully tackled in colour. In this last respect, 16 mm. has an added advantage over 35 mm. in that a colour film is made almost as easily as one in black and white, no special camera or equipment being required. Altogether, 16 mm. production is much less of a nuisance and causes but a fraction of the disruption of normal school activities than would be necessary during 35 mm. filming, involving as it does more and heavier equipment and a larger number of personnel. And the main advantage of 35 mm., that of the possibility of large-screen projection, is in this case negligible. Let me once more stress that the days when "amateur" and "16 mm." were one and the same thing are decidedly over—just look at the U.S.A.'s huge 16 mm. industry if you seek confirmation—and that nowadays a standard of excellence IS possible in 16 mm. quite comparable to that of 35 mm. for the purposes here discussed. While the "amateurs" deserve encouragement in every form, I submit that the greatest advantages can be reaped on both sides in the collaboration between the educationalist interested in film production, and the direct 16 mm. producer.

Finally, let me concur heartily with Ken Annakin in his plea for more libraries, modern equipment and better facilities all round. In these days, when everything possible is done to improve the presentation of a technicoloured Betty Grable, surely this is not too much to ask of the powers that be.

W. LASSALLY.

Dear Sir,

Ken Annakin's article in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND prompts me to express the heretical opinion that the film is *not* a good medium for imparting information. The idea that this is its function in education is the basis of Mr. Annakin's belief that educational films can be made by stringing together stock shots, and is also the source of many misconceptions firmly held by educationalists, which may be summarised in the proposition that films for school use should be as dull as possible.

In common with almost any other medium, the film *can* list facts if called upon to do so, but there are already in educational methods other devices much more fitted for the purpose, and the use of the film would be unjustified on this score alone, as many people have been quick to point out. Is there, then, really any justification at all for introducing this complicated tool into the school?

At a recent conference, Mr. D. R. Hardman, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Education, is reported as saying "Schools have been classroom-ridden, lesson-ridden, textbook-ridden and information-ridden, but this is slowly being corrected and lessons are being related to the children's experience", and also "We shall try to make them excited by history and geography". Without enquiring for the moment just how the faults listed by Mr. Hardman are being corrected, we can agree, I think, that it is vitally necessary for learning to be related to the child's experience. Learning is an intellectual process, but must rest on an emotional foundation; no one can learn things which seem to him divorced from all reality as he knows it—though of course it is possible to acquire temporarily enough facts to pass an examination. We can also agree that if children can be excited by those traditionally dull subjects, history and geography, a great victory for educational methods will have been won, since true learning proceeds only from interest and curiosity.

Here, I believe, lies the great field of the film in education. It is not a logical medium; its power lies in its ability to over-ride the tiresome details of life. It can relate with ease apparently unrelated facts. It can show without effort, for example, the relation between the great forests of the world and the daily newspaper. What is more important, it can establish a link between theory and practice. It can dramatise. It can both relate learning to the child's experience and arouse his curiosity, and thus make the teacher's work more successful.

This conception of the function of the film leaves the fundamental problem of teaching untouched, and does not assume that the teacher can be somehow super-

sed. The educational film cannot be a "prefabricated lesson", in the excellent phrase coined by Mr. G. Patrick Meredith. Moreover, it implies that the film cannot be classed with other "visual aids" which do not have its peculiar power.

I cannot therefore agree with Mr. Annakin that the school film is "first and foremost a lesson", nor with the conclusions he draws from this premise. Those conclusions are perhaps more applicable to training films intended for adult consumption, where some practical interest in the subject is pre-supposed, since the adult mind is better able to visualise the end point of its efforts and can to some extent dispense with sugar around the pill. For the child, however, stimulus of the imagination will continue to be a fundamental prerequisite, and films to achieve this end cannot be made on the lines suggested by Mr. Annakin. And it seems to me dangerous to suggest that they can.

Yours faithfully,

ERIC WOOLLEY.

11 Dendy Road,
Paignton,
Devon.

GOD AND FILM

Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Sir,

Allow me to make a few comments on Mr. Andrew Buchanan's interesting article, "God and Film", published in your last issue.

Mr. Buchanan is an admirable short film producer and knows his subject inside out, but, if he will forgive me, that is no reason to attach equal importance to what he says about religion. Here he is on the same ground as you or I. This is by way of being an explanation for myself, a layman, having the effrontery to criticise an expert. In point of fact I find myself in agreement with Mr. Buchanan's idea of true religion, but not with his proposed relationship between religion and films. His first paragraph shows him to be conscious that what he is about to write may be just another "tract" with a "confused idea". By merely telling us that it is not (a favourite sophistry among writers) doesn't absolve what follows from the criticism.

Mr. Buchanan wants to train people with films in spiritual requirements as they are now being trained so efficiently in material requirements. There is something profoundly wrong here. As religion is essentially a personal faith at the root so is spiritual education essentially a personal experience which can only be discovered and appreciated by one's own effort. No amount of outside encouragement can really hasten the understanding. When one is ready to understand, one understands in one's own time and way and any attempted precipitation of this will only serve to confuse the issue. This would not be true of biblical facts, of course, but I don't think Mr. Buchanan is thinking of these as essentially spiritual education.

He is surely right in his assumption that the world's salvation lies in the ignition of that undefined "spark" in every individual. That is the supreme aim of educa-

tion—to ignite the flame that it may thereafter keep itself burning. But the combustion does not occur as the result of any directly applied match, as it were; rather it is the result of friction from what are probably quite arbitrary thoughts and ideas. The object of education is to prepare the soil and plant these ideas. Their growth cannot be forced, and the culture of the seed, once planted, is up to the individual.

Now in regard to films for spiritual education, Mr. Buchanan says that "Only a group receiving its inspiration from God could undertake the work—a group established *especially for the purpose*, and for no other". The italics are mine for here, I think, is where Mr. Buchanan goes astray. This is the directly applied match and the forced growth, and will be recognised as such. A film made with some moral or spiritual value as its purpose is usually intolerably sentimental and affected, however sincere and honest is the effort of the director and the actors. You cannot represent religious piety direct on the screen, it must come as incidental to the purpose of the film. For instance, as with the priest in *The Last Chance*, which film had for its purpose to tell the story of an escape. As I have said, spiritual feeling is an individual affair at root and any attempt to represent it, let alone proselytize about it, must be seen by most people as inadequate and, therefore, cheap and to some extent embarrassing.

There are two distinct methods of education which are nevertheless complementary to each other. One method is science and the other art. Viewing the film as an educational medium, the scientific film method, "to train people in material requirements", has already proved its immense value and efficiency; but to train for the spiritual requirements there is only one other method—art. The film of artistic quality will inevitably contain the spiritual quality and value as an integral part, and this will remain incidental to the main purpose of the film whether it be fictional or otherwise. There is as much, if not more, spiritual quality conveyed through the characters of *Brief Encounter* as there is in *The Song of Bernadette*, for instance. Moreover, in this sense, it is quite possible, materially and spiritually, to "be making a musical comedy one day and a religious film the next". Musical comedy, however fantastic in plot, can still be made with art and intelligence so that the real and false values can be differentiated while each taking its full due. Indeed, it is in the popular forms like musical comedy, merely because they are popular, that the confusion of spiritual and moral values should be given the most attention.

Mr. Buchanan, while developing his case, says as much himself. "We must give religion such a wide interpretation", he says, "that the results will not be recognised as religion at all. We should plan to make a continuous series of films showing human life in all nations, and seek to distribute them in all nations. How individuals work, worship or don't worship, live, play. How they bring up their children. Their art and their music. The kind and charitable acts they do as individuals. . ." What else does the normal run of straight entertainment film do but these very things, although perhaps sugared over at times with

rather more fictional content than Mr. Buchanan would like to see? In the same number of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, A. Jympson Harman bears out the importance of this point when he says: "It is doubtful if the specialised educational or cultural film will ever overtake the tremendous influence of the "entertainment" film. . . . The film educationalist cannot afford to overlook the importance, for good or evil, of the average cinema programme". It is to the "entertainment" films of all kinds, at present in production or planned for production, that we must bring every effort to see the spiritual requirements honestly presented; not to try and establish a separate group for that purpose and for no other.

ADRIAN CAIRNS.

INDUSTRIAL FILMS

Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND.

Dear Sir,

Numerous films on industrial subjects have been produced from time to time. Many of these do not appear in regular catalogues and are difficult to trace, yet they would be of considerable interest to a

wider audience than they now reach. The need for a comprehensive catalogue has long been felt.

We shall be glad if you will draw the attention of your readers to the fact that the Scientific Film Association is now engaged upon the preparation of a list of industrial films. A preliminary list containing 200 titles has been prepared and copies may be obtained from the S.F.A. at a nominal charge of 2s. per copy.

Any information your readers may be able to give us which will enable us to add to the list would be greatly appreciated.

The title of the film, the source from which it may be hired or borrowed and other relevant particulars should be sent to:

Hon. Secretary, Industrial Committee,
Scientific Film Association,
34, Soho Square, London, W.1.

We should like to stress the fact that the Scientific Film Association is a non-profit-making body whose aim is to promote the fullest possible use of the film for education and research in science and technology.

V. J. DONNELLY,
Hon. Secretary, Industrial Committee.

NOTES AND NEWS

Owing to great pressure on space a number of notices have had to be omitted. Will Film Society Secretaries please help by keeping their copy as short as possible and by sending it to this office well before the day we go to press—i.e., the 1st of January, April, July and October.

Bradford Civic Playhouse

During 1946 a large number of films have been shown to enthusiastic audiences. These have included *L'Homme Qui cherche la vente*, *Marie Louise*, *Lermontov*, *Beethoven*, *Ils étaient neuf*, *Celebatains*, *Espoir* and *Une Femme Disparait*.

The Playhouse also publishes an excellent magazine, *Theatre*, published three times a year. In the Spring issue John Maddison contributes an interesting and authoritative article on Georges Métrès, the pioneer of fantasy in the film and one of its greatest creative geniuses. Other contributors include Peter Noble, Eric Johns and Thomas Walton (subscription: 8s. per annum, from the Bradford Civic Playhouse, Bradford).

The new season will open on September 25th, when Mr. Joseph Macleod, Managing Director of Scottish National Film Studios, will address a public meeting in Carnegie Hall. Sunday performances will be held in the Palace Cinema on October 13th, November 10th, December 8th, January 12th, February 9th and March 9th. *The Blue Angel* will be the principal film at the first Sunday performance. The possibility is being considered of holding several 16 mm. performances dealing with the history of the cinema.

Efforts are now being made to secure clubrooms and it is hoped that these will be available for the beginning of the season.

The Honorary Secretary will be glad to exchange programmes with other Societies.

Dunfermline and West Fife Film Society

The final performance of the 1945-1946 season was a brief review of war-time documentaries including *World of Plenty*, *Le Journal de la Resistance*, and *Atlantic Trawler*.

At the Annual General Meeting, Mr. W. R. Aitken, M.A., was elected Chairman, Mr. Ord A. Lee, Vice-Chairman, and Mr. J. S. M. Condon, 11, Rose Street, Dunfermline, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

The Hull and District Film Society
The Society has had a very successful inaugural season. Interest was maintained throughout the season.

The Society plans eight monthly shows for season 1946-47 and one meeting at which it is hoped only a feature film will be shown. The remainder of the time will be occupied by a talk on Films by a prominent personality in the film world.

The Hon. Secretary of this Society, Albert Leaper, 22, Barrington Avenue, Hull, welcomes other Society's programmes. Ours will be sent in exchange.

Lancashire Rural Adult Education Scheme

In the rural north of Lancashire villagers may visit weekly the cinema in the nearest market town. Few are completely out of touch with film entertainment. In consequence the Lancashire Education Committee has sponsored for several years a scheme of film appreciation for adults. Programmes of 16 mm. classics, silent and sound, have been shown in various villages. A lecturer briefly introduces each film and briefly comments on it afterwards. Sometimes, but not often, there is discussion. At first this lack of a normal part of adult education disturbed the organiser, but in the end he came to the conclusion that circumstances did not encourage it. Films were attracting people who would not attend ordinary lectures; and even those who would, if they had just been through a marked emotional experience born of the beauty or dramatic intensity of a film, did not willingly go from a mood of appreciation to one of criticism, from feeling strongly to thinking keenly. And discussion or no discussion, seeing and hearing good films was itself an educative experience that would gradually raise the standard of taste.

At one centre, using a sound projector, last session's programme included, among others, *Rembrandt*, *Atlantide*, *La Bete Humaine*, *Man of Aran*, and *Song of Ceylon*. At another centre, which had only a silent projector, *Nanook of the North*, *General Line*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and *The Italian Straw Hat* were shown, together with many short documentaries grouped to make complete evening programmes.

The National Film Library has been invaluable, but after it has been drawn upon for several sessions, it reveals the shortcoming of all good things—there is not enough of it.

Leicester : Southfields Library

Great success attended the policy of the City Libraries Committee in continuing to hold the series of film-lectures during winter 1945-1946. Fourteen programmes were shown, each having two performances and composed, generally, by one film of twenty minutes length, followed by two lasting ten minutes each.

A collective title summarised the theme of each three films, and headings ranged from *The Face of Britain* to *Background to Industry*; *Other People's Jobs* to *Health and the Child*.

Interest continued to be high, over 4,300 attending the winter shows, which encourages the opinion that this coming winter's programme, starting September, 1946, will be equally successful.

The Lewis Film Society

The Society (President, T. Henderson, M.A., Secretary, G. S. Ferrier, Ph.D., 25, Francis Street, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis) has made a promising start during its first season.

At present the Society is limited to the use of 16 mm. silent films, but it is hoped that when apparatus becomes available, the activities of the Society may be extended. Feature films shown during the past season included *Battleship Potemkin*, *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Covered Wagon*,

End of St. Petersburg, and *Metropolis*. A number of educational short films were also shown.

A number of Discussion Meetings proved extremely popular at which matters of general interest affecting the art of the film were discussed, and films recently shown in Stornoway were criticised.

National Film Society of Canada (Montreal Branch)

The sixth season of this Society has been most successful, and there is a waiting list of 300 prospective members. Among the films shown have been *M, Merlusse*, *La Grande Illusion*, *Tanosik*, *Sands of East Asia* (a Russian scientific film), *Le Puritain*, and *Land without Bread*.

Northampton Film Society

The Society was formed in October, 1945, and after the usual initial difficulties the first show was given in January, at the College of Technology; this was followed by four others at intervals of three weeks. Membership now stands at 100 which, together with guests, makes it imperative to find fresh accommodation for next season. Films shown, all 16 mm., include *Caligari*, *The Last Laugh*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Drawings that Walk and Talk*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Bank Holiday*, and among the shorts, *Transfer of Power*, *This is Colour*, *Medieval Village*, several of the *Secrets of Life* series and cartoons including *Chante Populaires* and *Carmen*.

Dr. Roger Manvell lectured to a joint meeting with the W.E.A. on 25th May, and in view of its success it is hoped to arrange other lectures in the near future. At the Annual General Meeting on 1st June, it was decided to include both 35 mm. and 16 mm. shows next season and also to purchase appropriate books for circulation among members. The Hon. Secretary is Mr. J. H. Thornton, 39, The Headlands, Northampton. A more detailed account of the activities of this Society will appear in the Autumn issue.

Swansea Film Society

The Society has successfully completed its second season with a membership of 294, and now looks forward to even greater progress with the advent of 35 mm. shows. We shall provide supplementary performances on 16 mm., both for members and outside organisations. During the past season among the films screened were *The Italian Straw Hat*, *The Russian Story*, *Kameradschaft*, *La Bete Humaine*, *The Story of D.D.T.*, *Cyprus is an Island*, *Neuro-Psychiatry*, *Colour in Clay*, *Eskimo Arts and Crafts*, and *This is Colour*.

The Society fills a cultural and educational need in the area and hopes to promote the appreciation of the film in these spheres. We have been handicapped by our dependence on sub-standard stock, but hard work by our Secretary has opened up a new vista on 35 mm. The Society will in future hold a performance once a month, on Wednesday evening at the Welfare Cinema. Among the films to be screened are *Ils Etaient Neuf Celibataires*, *Fantasia*, *Childhood of Maxim Gorki*, *Un Carnet du Bal*, *Testament of Dr. Mahuse*, and *Fric Frac*, together with the best in supporting films. May we take this opportunity of

thanking all those societies who sent us programmes, which have proved of the greatest value to us, a service we shall now reciprocate. Members of other societies who visit Swansea are invited to attend our shows, guest tickets available from the secretaries.

The Society is now fully established, the President being D. M. Evans-Bevan, Esq., J.P., Vice-Presidents, Rev. J. Gwyn-Davies and L. J. Drew, Esq., M.A., M.Ed. All correspondence to The Joint Secretaries, 33, Lon Cadog, Cwmgwyn, Swansea.

Torbay Cine Society

This Society held its inaugural meeting on 4th April this year, and has Dr. Roger Manvell as its first President. Mr. I. F. Glover, well known in this area as an enthusiastic amateur, is Chairman, the Secretary is Mr. Eric Woolley, a professional worker in 16 mm., and the Treasurer, Mr. C. G. Simons, who lately held a similar position in the Wanstead and Woodford Film Society.

The two meetings already held augur well for the future. The last meeting was open to the public, the programme consisting of *Caligari*, an extract from *Metropolis* and *Carmen*, with some explanatory remarks by the Secretary. This meeting was largely experimental, but the interest aroused was such as to justify the planning of a more ambitious project on similar lines in August. The possibility of hiring a cinema for 35 mm. showings has been investigated with encouraging results, and it is hoped that such shows will be possible in the relatively near future.

The Society's main difficulty has been to find a suitable meeting-place, and this remains a problem during the summer. Accommodation has already been arranged for the winter, however, when fortnightly meetings will be held. Several lecturers have promised to visit us towards the end of the year, and we look forward to an interesting and active winter season.

Enquiries are welcomed, and should be addressed to the Hon. General Secretary, 11, Dendy Road, Paignton, Devon.

Acknowledgment

We regret that, owing to an oversight, acknowledgments to the "Edinburgh House Visual Aids Bulletin" did not appear with the article, "The African Motion Picture Project," published in SIGHT AND SOUND, Vol. 14, No. 56.

"News from Germany"

The writer (H. H. Wollenberg) had asked for certain corrections when we had already gone to press. This applies to the names of German film artistes quoted in connection with a production unit formed in Hamburg. Some of those names are on the "Black List" because of their Nazi associations. The number of twenty cinemas for civilian use operating at Hamburg is far below the real figure. There were (up to the first week in April) in the Berlin area: 38 static cinemas; Hamburg area: static, 140, mobile, 29; Hanover area, static, 230, mobile, 21; Rhine Province and Westphalia, 6; total 414. All these figures should since have increased owing to repair work.

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